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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a European Training Foundation Advisory Forum study of vocational education and training (VET) and retraining in the regions of the European Union (EU) that synthesized overviews of the general country situations regarding the territorial organization of the VET system and policy and relevant case studies concerning decentralization of training and retraining. Topics covered in the report's four sections are as follows: (1) conclusions and recommendations for the European Training Foundation and European Commission (EC); (2) method; (3) VET as a factor in regional development; and (4) regionalization as a precondition of VET effectiveness (situation and trends in EU countries; current evolution of EU policy; situations and trends in partner countries; specific issues for acceding countries; and power sharing between states and regions). Appendixes constituting approximately 40% of the document contain the following: members of subgroup B; EC recommendations on regional training councils; typology of power sharing in education and VET; conditions of effective VET regionalization; advantages and difficulties of bringing decision making closer to problems and actors; synthetic assessment of the partner countries from National Observatories reports; and "Training and Development of Vulnerable Areas: Regional and Local Approach; Advisory Forum--Sub-group B" (Jean Luc Ferrand). The bibliography contains 41 references. (MN)

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Advisory Forum
Subgroup final report

REPORT

Training and retraining in regions

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The European Training Foundation is an agency of the European Union which works in the field of vocational education and training in Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States, Mongolia and the Mediterranean partner countries and territories. The Foundation also provides technical assistance to the European Commission for the Tempus Programme.

This report was prepared with the financial assistance of the European Training Foundation. The views expressed herein are those of the contractor and do not necessarily represent any official views of the Foundation.

Foreword

As part of its on-going role to provide accurate, reliable, up-to-date information about vocational education and training reform in its partner countries, the European Training Foundation presents, with this document, one in a series of analytical reports that have been based on the discussion and debate among key actors within the Advisory Forum.

The Advisory Forum is a body made up of experts from each partner country, EU Member States and relevant international and social partner organisations. It meets in sub-groups to discuss and prepare reports on particular topics for discussion at the Advisory Forum plenary meeting. The meetings each year provide useful intelligence for all members in vocational education and training reform to use in their own work. Themes are chosen by partner country members and represent areas which are of particular interest and concern to economies in transition. They also provide vital information on vocational education and training activities in these countries.

Four themes were presented by the sub-groups in 1999

- Training against social exclusion (Subgroup A).
- Training and retraining in the regions (Subgroup B).
- The impact of labour market information on vocational education and training standards (Subgroup C).
- Innovative practice in teacher training in vocational education and training (Subgroup D).

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 *Origin of the Subgroup B report*

In response to request from the European Training Foundation, the Advisory Forum at the last plenary meeting (Turin, 7-9 September 1998) gave Subgroup B the responsibility to work on '*The role of training and retraining in regions*'.

This is not a completely new theme for the European Training Foundation, which has completed a set of four pilot studies on *vocational education and training in the context of Regional Development* in partner pre-accession countries, namely Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. Their scope is to assess the regional preparedness for applying the European Social Fund (ESF) within the candidate countries.

Other works under the responsibility or with the participation of European Training Foundation include the pilot project in north west Russia, a regional study in Romania (Constanza), a Phare cooperation in Hungary and the preparation of seminars with the Committee of the Regions.

It can be assumed that this theme will be a subject of elaboration and a field of intervention for the Foundation for quite some time to come.

1.2 *Main lessons from the Subgroup B work*

A. Methodological issues

1. Although 'training and retraining in regions' is not an completely new theme, the relevant literature is very limited; the Subgroup therefore has had to substantially base its work on its members' experience.
2. Another difficulty the Subgroup has had to deal with comes from the lack of a precise definition of the term 'region', which covers both a policy area with or without administrative institutions and a self-governed territory; the same difficulty is faced with 'regionalisation', which includes such different situations and processes as the deconcentration of State departments, devolution of State powers to autonomous regions (decentralisation) or federal organisation.
3. In most countries, regionalisation is not in question but is an on-going process in response to economic and social constraints, recommendations from the European Union and the move towards a lesser role by the State. Vocational education and training has to find its place in this process. Therefore, the relevance of the work theme was considered unquestionable by the Subgroup B members.
4. In these countries the current question is no more '*why decentralise vocational education and training*' but '*how to do it successfully*'. To prepare a relevant answer, the Subgroup examined the theme from two complementary points of view:

   (i) the need of vocational education and training for regional development, and

   (ii) the need of the region for increasing vocational education and training effectiveness.

B. *Vocational education and training as a factor of regional development*

1. According to the experience of members of the European Union, regional policy consists not only of reducing the most glaring disparities, but more and more in promoting all endogenous regional factors (i.e. those originating from within), human resources being one, if not, the most important one.

2. The European Union's regional policy aims right from the start at strengthening the economic and social structure of regions facing development gaps or restructuring necessities. It has now a second objective, which is to develop employment. To achieve this it provides both financial as well material support with regard to investment in human resources development. Nevertheless, the full integration of these two kinds of means still faces great cultural and administrative obstacles.

3. In partner countries, regional development was not a priority concern for the new democratic states, which had first to set up democratic institutions and reform the economic system. The threat of the collapse of large industrial sectors now leads them to consider the restructuring of whole regions both the economic and human resource perspective.

4. Acceding countries must now elaborate a *Preliminary National Development Plan* and prepare institutions and procedures for the future actions under the Structural Funds. Both operations integrate all components of the regional development, including human resources (i.e. education, training and retraining, culture, science and technology).

5. To play an effective role in regional development, vocational education and training must be based on an accurate assessment of regional skill and training needs. Experience in anticipating demand suggest that such approach should combine a mid to long-term vision incorporating detailed knowledge of the particular situation in question and the evolution of firms and other employers.

6. Another condition of effectiveness consists in integrating vocational education and training policy into complex regional development programmes together with infrastructure, support to SMEs, and promoting technology.

7. It also requires increasing the regional training capacities and means, elaborating a regional training plan and strengthening the involvement of all partners: local communities, business organisations, trade unions, social inclusion NGOs, etc.

8. Vocational education and training can contribute effectively to regional development even in areas without the capacity to execute their own autonomous policies. Nevertheless its contribution is far more effective in the framework of a self-governed region.

C. *Regionalisation as a factor of vocational education and training effectiveness*

1. In the European Union, most Member States are experiencing the regionalisation of the continuing training system and policy. The situation is more complex and contrasted regarding initial vocational education. In both cases, the respective roles of the State and Region are still a subject for debate.

2. The European Union itself gives a prominent role to the Region for operating the ESF as well as other Structural Funds. Nevertheless, experts and the Committee of Regions recommend the EU to consider even more explicitly the region as the most appropriate framework for an effective training policy.

3. In partner countries the State's general disengagement and its financial difficulties led to the transferring of most of training and retraining competencies to local or regional level, often without transferring all the corresponding resources (human and financial). The local/regional authorities focus on managing demand and organising the market supply (coming as well from the public as the private sector). In some cases, they have to compensate for the lack of supply and establish new training institutions.

4. Acceding countries now have the right to regionalise their vocational education and training policy in order to integrate it into Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs), which shall materialise under the National Development Plan.

5. Experience indicates that vocational education and training regionalisation can be achieved at different territorial levels and according to different patterns, amongst which are deconcentration, decentralisation and federalism.

6. In most cases, vocational education and training regionalisation is a process. Transitional situations can include: the creation of regional units of the central administration with a further possibility for adaptation, a partial devolution to regions co-existing with deconcentration, a pilot approach progressively extended throughout the whole country.

7. Vocational education and training regionalisation is not a panacea. It will not necessarily make vocational education and training everywhere immediately more efficient. It does not exempt the State from all responsibilities, but it will alter the nature of these responsibilities. Therefore the crucial aspect of the decentralisation process consists of sharing the responsibilities between the central and the regional level and defining precisely the respective competences of the State and regions. It must be supported by the sharing of human and financial resources. In fact, an autonomous regional vocational education and training policy must be funded by autonomous regional resources (in particular coming from a regional taxation system organised by the legislation) and not be entirely dependent from the State budget allocation.

8. The state must guarantee the transparency, the quality and the equity of the vocational education and training system by way of laws, regulations, information and assistance. Regionalising vocational education and training is a challenge for the central institutions, which are invited to adapt fundamentally to the new context. It is not a natural tendency for people who have positions of power in these institutions. It needs willingness, tenacity, persuasion and information. The regionalisation will succeed more easily if it looks like a 'win-win' reform.

9. The region has to ensure that vocational education and training responds to the requirements of the regional economy and contributes effectively to regional development. Bringing the vocational education and training system and vocational education and training policy closer to its beneficiaries (workers, job seekers and employers) and partners (training providers, enterprises) will increase its effectiveness. It also contributes to the strengthening of democracy and therefore encourages an extensive dialogue and partnership for designing and implementing the vocational education and training. More specifically, it may convince the regional firms to co-finance not only the training they directly need but also the regional vocational education and training system as a whole.

10. Meeting specific regional vocational education and training needs is particularly necessary in sectors experiencing major problems. Examples include the industrial system undergoing fundamental restructuring, the maintenance of social urban cohesion, and moves to designed to keep activities and people in depressed rural areas.

11. Once the respective competencies and means of the State and regions are defined, the global coherence of vocational education and training policy must be achieved through State-regions negotiation and agreement, which precise what each partner is to support and finance.

1.3 *Orientations for the partner countries*

A. Orientations for all partner countries

Organising a regionalised vocational education and training system

a) Vocational education and training responsibility should be shared between the State authority and the local/regional authorities giving each clear-cut competencies. Prepare the share with social partners and local/regional authorities. Define, on the one hand, the common national rules and, on the other, the adaptable local/regional policies.

b) All the means corresponding to the devolved competencies should be transfering to local/regional level. Without this devolution would turn into the collapse of the vocational education and training system, in particular infrastructures, institutions, personnel, and financial resources guaranteed by the fiscal legislation.

c) Wherever autonomous regions exists, regional governments should be given the main competencies transferred to local/regional level, in particular responsibility for the coordination between training and employment policies.

d) The role of the State administration should be focused on securing the equity, quality and transparency of the vocational education and training system. It should also provide assistance vis-à-vis the vocational education and training local/regional authorities.

e) Agreements between the State and regions should be negotiated guaranteeing the equity, quality and transparency of the regional training policy. The required means public (state and region) should be concentrated in regions threatened by the collapse of mono-industries.

f) An extended partnership at the regional level, including local communities, business organisations, trade unions, social inclusion NGOs, etc. should be promoted and organised on a legal basis. Its specific role should be recognised with the regional authorities.

Assessing the regional needs and demand for training

a) Methods for anticipating the demands for qualifications and the corresponding needs of training and retraining need to be elaborated. Within the context of uncertain and rapid change, effective methods at regional level need to be promoted which may be based on a permanent dialogue involving all concerned parties (public and private) and may require a clear position of the State concerning the threatened activities in question. Skill needs and the demand solvability of regional firms need to be assessed.

Providing vocational education and training policy operators with the appropriate means

a) Central administrations and the civil servants need to be prepared for their redefined role. They also need to be provided with related qualifications through appropriate training sessions.

b) The supply capacity of vocational education and training schools needs to be enhanced, including through networking. They need to be encouraged to participate in the implementation of regional programmes, for example by recruiting temporary teachers for specific projects and giving ordinary staff extra-wages for extra-work.

c) Vocational education and training local/regional authorities need to be provided with training related with: the assessment of needs, design of strategy, elaboration and implementation of programmes, management of projects, monitoring and evaluations, management of financial and human resources.

B. *Specific orientations for Acceding Countries*

Planning and programming

a) Vocational education and training should be integrated into the *Regional operational programmes* (ROPs) which will be elaborated and implemented during the pre-accession period with the support of the national *Special Preparatory Programme* (SPP). The same should be carried out for other regional/local programmes implemented under the *Cross-Border Cooperation* (CBC) or the *Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development* (SAPARD).

b) Regional vocational education and training plans should be prepared which should be coherent with the national Frame of reference for human resources development - to be elaborated. Support existing regional institutions as leaders of that preparation on the basis of extended partnership with local communities, business organisations, trade unions and concerned NGOs.

Training and retraining

a) Future regional managers and operators of the European Social Fund (ESF) funded operations on Structural Funds and ESF regulations and procedures should be given training. National/regional procedures for operating ESF funding should be prepared.

b) Extensive training on project management (identification, elaboration, and implementation) should be organised for all possible training suppliers (schools and other training establishments, firms, local communities, trade unions, business organisations, etc.) Guidelines for project management should be prepared (as well for programme managers as for project operators).

Institution building

a) A promotion and assistance unit at the national and/or regional level for supporting the regional vocational education and training management and the individual vocational education and training project operators should be set up in order to give small structures equal chances in participating in the programme alongside large firms or the universities, for instance.

b) The possibilities for co-financing the ESF supported operations as well as preparation for the conditions for such co-financing should be assessed; the respective contribution of the state, local/regional authorities and firms should be defined.

c) An integrated intervention of the Structural Funds at the regional level should be secured. As far as different national ministries will operate the Structural Funds technical management, the coordination of the concerned departments in an integrated regional management unit should be organised.

1.4 *Recommendations for the European Training Foundation and the European Commission*

A. Assessments, information and exchanges

1. **Drawing from part lessons and current main achievements** concerning 'Training and retraining in regions' in the partner countries, in particular:

   - Phare and Tacis regional programmes and projects need to be appraised. This could include: a preliminary document analysis; a field study of a sample of programmes and projects; a synthesis giving the conclusions and lessons of the appraisal (Such appraisal should be considered as a necessary stage for designing a strategy of vocational education and training regionalisation).

   - The rapid changes that are occurring in the partner countries in the relations between vocational education and training and regions should be monitored, in order to ensure the European Training Foundation policy remains relevant. The field of links should be enlarged to include the national and regional authorities responsible for regional development. The National Observatories should be asked to pay specific attention on to this. Appropriate methodology and guidelines for such watching should be designed.

   - Through the networks of European Training Foundation, Phare and Tacis, the main innovative processes and tools should be identified and assessed in two fields: (i) the contribution of vocational education and training to regional development, (ii) increasing vocational education and training effectiveness through regionalisation.

2. **The tools for evaluating the vocational education and training regional policy and institutions** and their integration within the regional development process should be prepared. Elaborate the guidelines for the different evaluations: ex ante, in itinere, ex post. The first round of ex ante evaluations should be organised.

3. **Information should be disseminated and exchanges promoted**, in particular:

   - The main lessons resulting from the works of Subgroup B on the regional approach of training and re-training should be widely disseminated. This should concern in particular the contribution of vocational education and training to regional development and increasing the vocational education and training effectiveness through regionalisation (as presented in § 1.2. above).

   - Information on past and current experiences should be disseminated (point 1 above). Exchanges between partner countries should be promoted. Multi-countries seminars, in particular for acceding countries, should be organised.

   - Exchanges between Member States and partner countries on vocational education and training regional management and vocational education and training in regional development (general, multi-country, national) should be organised.

   - The exchange of experiences between local/regional communities from the Member States and from the partner countries (seminars, twinnings, etc.) should be encouraged.

B. *Supplying assistance to partner countries*

1. **To assist the national authorities** for regionalising the vocational education and training system the following are proposed:
   - Any corresponding demand of assistance from the partner countries should be examined.
   - Advise should be provided to the former on elaborating and implementing the process of regionalising vocational education and training systems and policy. The principle and methods to define the respective competencies and resources of the state and regions should be provided. They should also be assisted in the setting up the vocational education and training regional management.
   - National authorities for the setting up of appropriate methods and tools for analysing needs and assessing demand at the regional level should be supported. This should be done whilst taking into account of the context of economic and social uncertainty of most regions.
   - Multi-country or national appropriate assistance programmes should be elaborated.
2. **Appropriate training programmes** should be proposed to implement vocational education and training regionalisation, concerning in particular:
   - the responsible people at the national level;
   - the vocational education and training regional managers;
   - the new regional authorities;
   - appropriate multi-country programmes.
3. **Recommendations for integrating vocational education and training in ROPs** should be produced (for the acceding countries); more focusing on offensive training and re-training should be recommended. Elaborate guidelines for vocational education and training integration into regional programming should also be suggested. National or multi-national workshops to disseminate and, when necessary, adapt the guidelines should be organised.

C. *Integrating human resource development and economic development in EC/European Training Foundation programmes*

1. New operations should be undertaken with:
   - the integration of vocational education and training into Phare/Tacis Regional development programmes or regional institution-building programmes;
   - the integration of economic and infrastructural development into regional vocational education and training programmes.

D. *Promoting the research*

1. The research on vocational education and training regional management and integration of vocational education and training in regional development should be promoted.

2. Method

2.1 *Origin and elaboration of the report*

In response to a European Training Foundation request, the Advisory Forum at the last plenary meeting (Turin, 7-9 September 1998) gave Subgroup B the responsibility of working on '*The role of training and retraining in regions*'.

The Meeting of the Advisory Forum Chairs and Experts (Turin, 6-7 December 1998) discussed the content and the agenda of Subgroup B. It recognised the novelty and complexity of the theme and agreed that Subgroup B should produce an introductory dossier with recommendations for further elaboration.

Subgroup B was perfectly aware that the responsibility it was given was so great than it was only able to some preliminary work. Nevertheless, in order to produce operational outputs for the Foundation, it has followed three principles:

- It accepted the regional level as opportune for running training and retraining programmes within the framework of national orientations;
- It rejected any model taken from an existing national situation but considering the regional approach of training and retraining as a long-term process;
- It gave no precise blueprint but rather general conditions for a successful management of training and retraining at the regional level.

An inception report was prepared by the Subgroup B expert in close cooperation with the Chair of the Subgroup.

The Subgroup members prepared, each one for its country, two different contributions (either written or oral) presenting (i) the general country situation regarding the territorial organisation of the vocational education and training system and policy; (ii) a relevant case study concerning the decentralisation of training and retraining.

All these materials were presented and debated by the Subgroup members during the Paris seminar (27-30 March 1999).

Then the expert wrote a first draft of the Subgroup B report based on the analyses and conclusions of the Seminar and on the complementary researches of the expert. That was sent to the Subgroup B members and the European Training Foundation officials concerned and has been submitted for their reactions and suggestions. It resulted in a second draft, which was presented to the European Training Foundation for an in-depth examination at the Advisory Forum meeting of chairs and experts in Turin on June 18, 1999.

This document is the final version of the Subgroup B report that was presented at the Plenary Session of the Advisory Forum on September 6-8, 1999.

2.2 *Key concepts*

A. Region

With regards to the vocational education and training policy, the term 'region' can be used in two meanings.

According to the first one, the region is a geographical and political unit generally defined by the law (if not the constitution). Its boundaries correspond with the administrative division of the national territory. The political dimension can be represented by a self-government and/or a representation of the central State administration. It is generally the second level of administration and/or government below the level of the State.

The second meaning concerns an area in which a particular policy is applied. This policy area has no political/administrative existence and no legally defined boundaries. It may result from either a top-down decision or a bottom-up initiative. In the first case, the centre creates the specific body responsible for the policy. In the second, the policy concerned is implemented by means of dialogue, negotiation and co-ordination.

A more comprehensive definition can be proposed, according to which the region is, at the immediate sub-national level, the largest area/community in which a broad consensus or agreement is possible for an effective integrated development policy, whether it is run by the State or an autonomous community.

B. Regionalisation

Regionalisation is considered as the process of placing the vocational education and training system and policy closer to the operators and beneficiaries. It consists in creating regional vocational education and training institutions with more or less extended powers and means.

In this regard, the concept decentralisation must be distinguished from the deconcentration one:

1. **Deconcentration**

   Deconcentration is the process enabling each State department to create executive units at a geographical level lower than the national one and to give them a certain grade of initiative. According to the size of the national territory there can be one or more executive levels.

2. **Decentralisation**

   Decentralisation is characterised by the existence of fully autonomous communities at geographical levels lower than the national one. Such communities are characterised by an elected executive body, a legal competence, its own financial capacities and skilled staff. Its competence can include education and training or, at least, some aspects of them.

3. **Federal organisation**

   The federal organisation is the most achieved system of power sharing between the central (federal) state and the territorial autonomous units, which constitute the national territory.

4. **Intermediate situations**

   Between the regional management of State vocational education and training policies and the total transfer of vocational education and training competence to regional elected bodies there is room for intermediate situations.

   Besides, deconcentration and decentralisation can coexist or operate as successive stages of a more global process of regionalisation.

C. *Human resources development*

Vocational education and training is a factor of human resources development.

It is not the only one. Other factors can be considered as important as vocational education and training.

That is obviously the case for general education, but also for science and technology as well as for culture.

2.3 *Two complementary approaches*

The regional approach of vocational education and training policy must be analysed from two points of view.

Firstly, training and retraining have to be considered has factor of regional development, together with other policies such as building infrastructures, promoting SMEs, developing technologies, etc.

Secondly, the region has to be regarded as an arena within which vocational education and training and the process of regionalising training and retraining systems and policy can operate.

With such an approach, the region can be considered in its both meanings.

3. Vocational education and training as a factor of regional development

3.1 Evolution and trends in the EU countries

In most of the EU countries, the regional policy and the regional development have been through several stages.

A. Reducing the regional disparities: vocational education and training as a secondary factor

In Western Europe after the Second World War, economic growth, which was mainly based on industrialisation, often resulted in important regional disparities. From the fifties, governments elaborated policies specifically tailored to reduce the most glaring disparities in regional growth. According to prevailing opinion at the time, a redistribution of growth could be achieved through a national reallocation of activities and/or by attracting foreign investment.

Human resources and training played a secondary role in this vision of regional policy due to the high growth rate and the absence of the problem of unemployment. The new activities could develop either through training local people or importing skilled workers from outside.

This model of regional policy worked effectively until the mid-seventies, after one or two decades of national reallocation of activities and wealth. Then the coming economic crisis made it more and more inefficient[1].

B. Tackling the restructuring crisis: vocational education and training as a prominent instrument

The crisis affected dramatically several economic sectors (first textiles, then mining and heavy industries, lastly defence industries) and the regions where they had a dominant economic position.

The firms that collapsed used to employ very specialised workers and its management was often of an authoritarian style leaving almost no possibility for individual initiative. This created very deep solidarity among workers who were not at all prepared to face unknown difficulties by themselves. Besides, most job opportunities for young people disappeared with the collapse of these firms, which then threatened the social cohesion of the community.

Even when easily foreseeable, the collapse of firms was usually not well handled. In fact, the firm and the region were so inextricably enmeshed that the disappearance of the economic pillar of the region was unthinkable.

Indeed, because of regional mobilisation and possible external support, a areas of industrial activity have developed progressively. But reaching the previous level of employment requires a long period of time, during which the region has to face very hard economic and social difficulties.

1 Mick Dunford. 'Les régions et le développement économique' in Patrick Le Galès & Christian Lequesne (Dir.), *Les paradoxes des régions en Europe*, Paris, Éditions La Découverte, 1997.

Solving all these economic and social problems requires the mobilisation of the whole range of vocational education and training activities: vocational education, training, retraining for all skills and levels. Besides, due to the diversity of the involved operators, the management system must be strongly based on partnership, including the State, local and regional authorities, employers and workers representatives, universities and other training providers.

Such mobilisation can be very effective in the short term restructuring, but with very progressive impact in the long term economic rebuilding, as suggested by the Lorraine example. (See Box 1 below)

Case study: Lessons from restructuring in the Lorraine region

In the mid-sixties, Lorraine was one of the most industrial French regions. From that time, the restructuring process affected successively iron mining, coal mining and textiles. The steel industry begun to be affected from the mid-seventies onwards. But the government decision to restructure drastically the steel industry was taken only in March 1984.

During the following four years as much as EUR 8 billion were committed for the region, of which 43% in restructured branches, 12% in infrastructures and 7% for promoting new activities. The remaining share (38%) aimed at solving problems faced by workers. Three main options were proposed: early retirement, financial support for self-employment and retraining.

1.1 billion ECU were spent in training actions. In 1984, 9% 16-60 years old people benefited from training. In 1987, there were 17%.

The training programme was considered as successful, not only because of its quantitative importance, but also due to a number of major innovations, such as:

- commitment of social partners,
- agreement between the State and the region,
- coordination with economic restructuring,
- new training procedures.

The restructuring programme implementation did not provoke serious social troubles. But, between 1982 and 1990, despite such massive efforts, industry went on losing jobs and 222,000 people (9.6% of the total population) migrated out of the region, which resulted with a net decline of the total population.

From 1988 up to now, the joint state-region programmes together with the European Objective 2 programmes focused particularly on initial education (including that at university level), on research and SMEs promotion.

As a result, the regional economy is developing towards a new structure and the total population has recovered to reach its 1982 level.

Lessons that can be drawn from the Lorraine experience include the following:

- changing the economic structure of the region was achieved in two stages, a relatively brief restructuring stage followed by a long one of economic rebuilding (still on-going);
- the vocational education and training effort was mainly focused on retraining during the first stage and on initial education during the second one;
- vocational education and training effectiveness was due to its capacity for innovation, its integration into comprehensive regional programmes, extensive cooperation between the region and the State and an active commitment of all social partners.

C. *Promoting development from within: vocational education and training as major factor*

During the current decade there has been a drastic change in the conception of regional policy.

On the one hand, the context of globalisation increasingly pushed national governments into considering regional development as one of the policies for promoting economic growth and into conceiving support programmes for global competitiveness. On the other hand it was admitted that as regional development could not be supported to a greater degree by the general economic growth, it should be based on the regions' inner strengths.

During the eighties, experts began to explain the region's performance by its indigenous capacity to develop its assets in particular through the availability of combined updated skills and firms' ability to exploit such local externalities. Therefore, regional policies began to give vocational education and training a growing role as a major factor of development. From the mid-nineties regional policy has aimed to increase the economic performance of each region. Therefore a strong emphasis has been put on innovation and creation by providing productive infrastructure and appropriate qualifications.

However, strengthening indigenous capacity has not simply consisted of making local manpower as qualified and employable as possible to fit economic requirements. Raising the qualifications level has also been necessary in the public services, including general education, health, culture, etc.

Besides, the policy orientation towards self-development within regions could turn out to be ineffective if no attention was paid to the planning and management capacity of the regions' officials belonging to the deconcentrated central services as well as the local and regional authorities.

The Committee of Regions is right, therefore, when it advocates that *"vocational training of human resources of local and regional administrations must be considered as a key factor in local and regional development and should therefore be given priority attention, both from the viewpoint of economic resources allocated to this field and from the angle of the support which public authorities should lend to training activities for public servants"*[2].

D. *Developing the immaterial activities: towards the 'learning region'*

Globalisation today and the resulting reallocation of activities focuses attention on immaterial products and production organisation, and generates new conceptions and policies in the field of regional development. They consider human resources, boosted by innovation and training, as the motor for competitiveness for firms as well as for regions. They refer to such archetypal examples as Silicon Valley and Route 128.

According to analysts, the economic performance of this kind of regions is linked with *"the importance of social interaction between the various agents within the system and a continuous learning process involving all of them"*[3]. They are known now as *learning regions*.

In the European Union, many regions have the ambition to follow these prestigious examples, by setting up a network of universities, professional schools, science parks, innovation centres and technopoles, and promoting active programmes of technology transfer.

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2 *Draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions on "Eurotraining for Local and Regional Authorities in Europe"*. Rapporteurs: Ms Helene Lund and Mr Jordi Pujol i Soley. Brussels, 8 February 1999

3 *Regional competitiveness and skills*, OECD, 1997 (p. 43)

3.2 *EU policy and its current evolution*

A. 1988: the reform of the structural policy

The European Social Fund (ESF) was one of the first Structural Funds, created as early as 1957. The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund - EAGGF (1962) and the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF (1975) followed afterwards. In 1988, the European Union reformed these Structural Funds. Among the new orientations were joint intervention of the Funds and programming process. Consequently, a significant proportion of the Funds was to be spent jointly within the framework of regional programmes.

By tradition, regional policy belonged to the cohesion policies and was designed to reduce disparities by transferring resources from the richest regions to the disadvantaged ones, that is those affected by high unemployment, low income levels or high out-migration.

Therefore, since 1989, the Structural Funds have been aimed '*developing and promoting the structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind* [Objective 1] *and economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties and adapting*' [industrial areas: Objective 2; rural areas: Objective 5b] thus reducing the disparities among the different European regions by financing effective programmes of infrastructure investment, SMEs development, science and technology, and education and training policies. In 1994, more than half of the EU population lived in subsidised regions.

The current orientations put more emphasis on education and training at regional level, since development is less and less seen as the result of exogenous interventions and more and more coming from local and regional initiative and investment, while human resources development is considered a key factor of endogenous development (i.e. from within).

For the 1994-1999 period, the total amount allocated for the Structural Funds was over ECU 160 billion, that is about one third of the total Community budget. More than 75% was dedicated to co-finance regional programmes (corresponding to objectives 1, 2, 5b and 6 of the Structural Funds).

However, in most case, the joint intervention of the Funds is not easy to achieve, because the sectoral departments are deeply fragmented, each one being characterised by specific regulations, habits and culture[4]. This illustrates the general assessment of J. Goddard on "*regional education and training programmes [operating] within 'silos', striving to reach quantitative targets, such as training places provided for the long-term unemployed, with little regard for the economic development benefits*"[5].

B. 1993-1997: the employment objective

After a first round of structural programmes (1989-1993), the EU decided to give a new aim for Structural Fund intervention. Not only should such intervention promote the renewal of economic structures within the weakest regions, but they should also raise skill levels and combat unemployment via the creation of new jobs and training opportunities.

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4 In Spain, for example, an evaluation of the actions co-financed by ESF within the framework of Objective 1 programmes was carried out in 1997. It analyses in particular the effects and impacts of the ESF intervention, but only from the point of view of training and employment, that is without referring neither to the other components of the Objective 1 programmes or to the aims of regional development. The same could be found in other countries (France, for instance).

5 J. Goddart, 'Conclusions' in *Regional competitiveness and skills*, OECD, 1997 (p. 180)

It is coherent with the new conception of regional development where regions are invited *"to better help themselves"*[6], and where the engine of the development policy is no longer concerned with simply the transfer of financial resources from outside, but the quality of a region's inhabitants and a region's capacity to attract complementary human resources, including skills, competences, knowledge, innovation and technology. That innovation and technology are ranked among human resources might seem surprising. However, SMEs and even larger firms tend more and more to introduce innovation and technology not (or not only) by the means of equipment but by recruiting highly qualified specialists.

Training and employment were highlighted by the *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* in 1993 and the Essen European Council in 1994. They were confirmed in 1997 as major objectives of the European Union policy by the Amsterdam treaty and the Conference of Luxembourg.

Such orientation materialised already in the revised ESF regulations (1993), which stressed the need to fight unemployment and support employment aids.

During the six years 1994-1999, ESF contributed to the EU regional policy by bringing about 23% of the European contribution to Objective 1 and 2 programmes and up to 42% of Objective 5b ones.

Nevertheless, the high rate of unemployment, particularly in the 25 most affected regions (from a total of 206 NUTS 2 regions), is still a matter of significant concern. According to the European Commission, *"the resumption of growth alone will not solve such problems. What is needed is an integrated approach combining a strengthening of the economic basis with training measures aimed at improving the skills of those disadvantaged in the labour market and getting them into work"*[7].

C. *Agenda 2000. The proposed reform of the Structural Funds*

The recently approved regulations for the 2000-2006 period confirm the regional orientation of the Structural Funds intervention, since there will be only 3 priority objectives (instead of 7), of which 2 will concern regions facing difficulties.

The principle of the joint intervention of the Structural Funds is even more asserted. In the supported regions all Funds, including ESF, will operate exclusively within the framework of integrated programmes.

The third priority objective stresses on human resources development: it *"will serve as reference framework for all human resources operations in the Members States* [...] *and will take into account the Employment Title of the Amsterdam treaty and the Union's new Employment Strategy"*[8].

3.3 *Situation and trends in partner countries*

From 1989-1990, partner countries experienced significant changes more or less following three main stages, which affected diversely the regional development policies and the vocational education and training contribution to these policies.

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6 J. Goddart, 'Conclusions' in *Regional competitiveness and skills*, OECD, 1997 (p. 178)

7 European Union. Regional policy and cohesion. *Sixth Periodic Report on the regions: Summary of Main Findings.* Inforegio. Fact sheet 04.02.99 EN. (The European Commission adopted this report on 3 February 1999)

8 European Commission. EC Structural Funds. Proposed regulations governing the reform of the Structural Funds 2000-2006. Comparative analysis. 18.03.98

A. *First stage: collapse of the former system*

In most cases, when the new authorities committed themselves to change fundamentally the economic and political system, they began first by eliminating the former organisational structures.

The territorial structure of the country, which aimed at implementing the plan at the sub-national level, was abolished and no regional policy was substituted for it.

The vocational education and training system, which was organised on a sectoral (and not regional) basis with a prominent role of the largest firms, collapsed as soon as these firms were given a degree of autonomy over the management of their affairs.

B. *Second phase: building a new economic and political system*

Then, building a new economic and political system became the partner countries priority for several years. The changes were made at national level. They resulted in giving autonomy to firms and local communities. During that stage, neither regional development nor the vocational education and training contribution to it were considered as a priority issue.

Nevertheless, from very early on, the European Commission expressed its preference for an intervention at a level lower than the national one.

The first experiment seems to have been the 1992 proposal to create Regional Development Agencies and Regional Development Funds in the regions of Ostrava (Czech Republic) and Zilina (Slovakia). Then came the STRUDER Regional Programme, in Poland, which included designing development strategies, setting up financial and assistance structures, and supporting productive investment. This covered four regions (under national coordination). These programmes focused on economic restructuring and focused on supporting SMEs. They did not give the human resources development a significant role.

C. *Opening a new phase: restructuring mono-industrial regions*

As a consequence of introducing the market economy, many regions are experiencing or have experienced the decline or collapse of certain industrial sectors such as steel, coal mining, chemical, shipbuilding and defence. These sectors are characterised by the presence of large firms. Their disappearance results in massive redundancies not only within the firms themselves, but also among its local subcontractors and the consumer service industry that supply them. Hence, the whole region is drastically affected by what can be seen an economic and social setback.

Maribor's region in Slovenia, North Bohemia in the Czech Republic, Gdansk in Poland, for example, are experiencing such a situation. Other regions, especially those with coal mining and steel mills, will face this in the near future.

In most cases, specific restructuring programmes and special institutions have been set up to tackle with the collapse of activities and its consequences.

Some regions do not limit their ambition to the short-term measures. Thus, the North Moravia region around Ostrava (Czech Republic) has committed itself to drawing up a mid to long-term restructuring strategy (Regvis 2005) on the basis of an extended regional partnership (See Box 2 below). It resulted in a very useful document, which should orient all the coming programmes. This document seems nevertheless to underestimate the prominent role of training and retraining, maybe due to a unilateral (that is economist) conception of the development.

Regvis 2005. Long term planning in Ostrava region (Czech Republic)

Object	■ Creating the vision of regional future development
Area	■ Six districts of North Moravia and Silesia
Process period	■ November 1996 - May 1998
Coordinator	■ Regional Development Agency, Ostrava
Partnership	■ Representatives of: State local administration, local communities, large companies, SMEs, universities, church
Method	■ Regional profile ■ SWOT analysis ■ Objectives ■ Strategies
Outputs	■ Comprehensive strategy proposal (April 3, 1998) ■ Creation of an Implementation Group ■ Regional conference (May 5, 1998)
Following steps	■ Operational programme ■ Financial planning (and search for support) ■ Budget framework
Weaknesses	■ Little attention paid to training ■ No representation of trade unions in the partnership

Such prospects and initiatives lead Phare and Tacis to support more and more programmes at the regional level. As an example, in the Tacis Budget for 1998 for the Russian Federation, 15 programmes or projects out of 33 have a regional or local dimension either prominent or at least significant.

The importance progressively taken by the regional level in Phare and Tacis programmes has led the European Commission to stimulate the decentralisation process in the partner countries and propose special support for regional institution-building. For example, Phare is funding a large programme or regionalisation over several years in Romania while Tacis starting this year (1999) has been supplying financial help to Moldova in creating new regions.

3.4 *Specific issues for Acceding Countries*

Acceding countries face a major challenge in preparing their accession into the EU. It is compulsory for them to integrate the whole Community *acquis*, in particular in the regional development field.

A. Preliminary National Development Plan

One of these *acquis* is the regional programming process. In future, the acceding countries will be eligible for European Union support mainly through Objective 1 and the Community support

framework (CSF). The CSF will materialise in a comprehensive national plan for regional development and in so many operational programmes as regions.

One of the first tasks that the acceding countries have to achieve right now is to elaborate a preliminary National Development Plan, then to draft Regional Operational Programmes. These documents must combine all the aspects and factors of regional development, including infrastructures, technology, SMEs, education and training.

In the same time they must operate the pre-accession Funds (ISPA and SAPARD), which foreshadow the Cohesion Fund. The projects they finance in the field of environment, transport infrastructure, agriculture and rural development do not include training actions. Nevertheless the Funds can hardly be run without appropriate training.

B. Building institutions for the Structural and Cohesion Funds intervention

A substantial transfer of financial resources towards the new Member States will occur as a result of the four Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF, EAGGF Guidance Section and FIFG) and the Cohesion Fund. Dealing with these funds will require adapted institutions at both national and regional level.

Therefore pre-accession tasks include adapting the territorial organisation in anticipation of the intervention of European Funds and enhancing the regional preparedness for planning, programming and implementing comprehensive programmes with economic and vocational education and training measures.

3.5 Conditions of effectiveness

A. Assessing the regional needs for training and retraining

The contribution of vocational education and training to regional development is all the more effective as the demand for specific skills can be identified very quickly. It may work through close links between the local and regional firms and the bodies in charge of labour and training policies.

Indeed, this first requires close cooperation between the services responsible for labour and training policies, if they are distinct. It can then be more effective if local and regional firms are organised into an active network together with the labour and training regional units. The general precondition of the success of such a system is the presence of a well founded, close, relationship between the two actors.

Nevertheless, no matter how efficient this relationship is, the system often works only where the skill requirements are answered by very short training courses. The reality is that firms (and especially the smaller ones) are unable to make medium term forecasts. They are obliged to resort to immediate recruitment procedures since this responds to immediate needs.

The solution could lie in anticipating demand. During the Paris seminar, two contradictory experiences where presented. On one hand, the French person responsible for the State educational policy in Nord-Pas-de-Calais region gave a very sceptical account of its handling with the data provided by the regional employment observatory. On the other, the representative of FAS, the Irish Training and Employment Authority, presented an different opinion, considering that such anticipation of needs is possible and that a wrong forecast is better than no forecast at all.

Two main reasons could explain such different assessments. First, the differences between the data collecting systems and the forecasting methods. Second and most important, the specific regional context plays an important role in the success or failure of any forecasting exercise. Generally speaking, anticipation could be much easier and more successful and its possible mistakes are of less consequence in a context of economic growth than in an economically depressed area shrouded in a context of uncertainty.

Moreover, the effectiveness of any anticipation depends on the use of the results obtained. In this regard, it should be considered not only as the means to answer the foreseeable requirements of the regional economy, but above all as a tool for elaborating the appropriate policies to implement the regional development strategy.

B. *Elaborating an integrated strategy of regional development*

Giving regions a new economic orientation requires a strategy involving, together with training and retraining capacities, higher education, research and technology, intelligent infrastructure and equipment, development of leisure sites, etc. It must be an integrated strategy in which the components establish synergy with each other.

With such a strategy, what can be expected from training and retraining policies? It is most important that individuals should not only be encouraged to do their best to directly satisfy requirements that are forecast: they should also be encouraged to take control of their careers, not so much to be adaptable - which is a passive behaviour - but to be an actor in his own individual development. By doing so, an individual contributes to the regional development. One practical application of this would consist of creating the necessary favourable conditions to encourage those who want to create a new firm or go to self-employment.

Another direction concerns innovation and technology: supporting and introducing new processes and proposing retraining for specialists in order to provide them with the opportunity to update or reorientate their specialist skills. Emphasis should be made and campaigns should be organised on all kind of training and retraining in order to give local people as well as outsiders a positive image of the region (image of a 'learning region').

Last but not least, a global training approach would encourage and organise adapted forms of cooperation involving all main regional stakeholders, within constructive partnerships.

C. *Planning and programming*

As a management approach, the planning and programming system has several intrinsic advantages. Firstly, programmes are designed for limited periods (3-7 years) with specific objectives corresponding to current and foreseeable needs. Secondly, a good monitoring system provides the opportunity for a programme to be run permanently and for its implementation to be adapted so as to respond more appropriately to established objectives. Thirdly, it provides the opportunity for various evaluations (*in itinere* and *ex post*, in particular) and to check the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy. These advantages are particularly important in the case of training and retraining since they concern problems closely linked with a changing economic and social context.

But the main advantage of the planning and programming system is the opportunity it offers for joint policies with complex objectives. It is the case for regional development policies that usually take the shape of programmes concerning different development factors, such as natural resources, infrastructure, economy, human resources and institutions.

Planning, the first step, consists of analysing the situation (for instance with the SWOT method), assessing past experiences and achievements, establishing rationale, objectives and priorities. It should consider all the main aspects of the regional development: revenues, satisfaction of human needs, environment, etc. This is then developed in the form of programmes that fix over a previously determined period the objectives and measures, the costs and financial resources, the criteria and procedures.

Briefly speaking, such a process combines a long-term vision and rationale (planning) with precise objectives, measures and means (programming).

Thus, making vocational education and training an effective factor of regional development necessitates institutions and people able on one hand to conceive or adapt regional policies, and on the other hand to drive and coordinate their implementation within the framework of programmes.

Since the programmes are formed by a coherent set of projects, skills are required too in the field of project design and management, that is the capacity to manage the full project cycle from the initial objective up to the complete delivery. An assessment is therefore necessary of the potential operators who can elaborate and implement projects of regional policies and programmes in the field of human resources and employment development. Whether or not universities and schools have autonomy in decision-making and management, which gives them the ability to propose and implement specific projects, will be decisive. The same can be said for local communities and firms.

The success of a training and retraining programme and its impact on regional development is strongly related to the quality of projects. Therefore much emphasis must be put on information and promotion in order to progress all the possible worthwhile projects.

It could be very useful, also, to create an assistance unit, which will help with elaborating good projects the operators (schools, SMEs, NGOs), which are not familiar with project cycle management. It has been especially stressed by several participants at the Paris Seminar, in particular by the representatives of Italy and Slovenia.

D. Social dialogue, partnership and negotiated agreements

Training actions usually involve several social groups, among which are: policy managers, trainers, employers and trainees. Each one and its representative institutions have their own interests and strategy.

A good training policy takes into account, at the regional level, all these interests and strategies. This is only possible by considering all groups as partners of the policy. That should result in regional agreements where the groups are represented by legitimate institutions like regional councils, chambers of commerce, trade unions, schools associations, etc. These agreements could define the concrete objectives of the policy, the participative steering system, the respective financial contribution of each partner, etc.

Following the recommendation of Phare, consultative tripartite councils are being set up in several countries, such as Estonia, Poland and Slovenia. They highlight the recognised role of local communities, business and unions in defining and monitoring vocational education and training policy both at national and regional level.

3.6 *The question of power devolution*

With few exceptions, Member States as well as partner countries are at least considering the possible transfer of some aspect of decision-making on vocational education and training policy to regional level. There is a consensus that such a transfer is positive as long as it gives the regional level the means to truly respond the regional economic requirements.

One point has been debated during the Paris seminar: is local/regional vocational education and training management possible without formal devolution of powers to self-government? The general feeling was that the devolution of power is not a necessary condition, but it gives more possibilities and an increased effectiveness to the training and retraining system.

The OECD discussed this point and reached the same conclusion. It considers that *"formal devolution of power by central government is not an indispensable trigger for local management"*[9], an example being the area-based partnerships in Ireland. Nevertheless, decentralisation of decision making is regarded as more effective because:

- it gives more flexibility for responding to the regional needs,
- the officials consider more closely the expected outcomes of the policy,
- the social partners have a direct interest in contributing to the search for solutions.

One could consider this situation as representing one stage in the process of regionalisation of the vocational education and training policy. It can be true, but in several countries these programme areas (or project areas) coexist with autonomous regions, either an outline of State policy or as an expression of a local development initiative. In France, the '*pays*' created via a local initiative can then negotiate an agreement with the state administration, as well as with the regional self-government.

In England and the Wales, the TEC system has been developed by the State under the programme area organisation. In the absence of any other territorial level between the county and the State, such experience proved limited (See Box 3).

9 *Local Management. For more effective employment policies.* OECD, 1998 (p. 70)

Case study: Training and Enterprise Councils in the UK

Presentation

Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) which are public-private partnerships were established in 1990 as decentralised decision making bodies involving the private sector [...]. Training and Enterprise Councils, or Local Enterprises Companies in Scotland (LECs) created as private companies with limited liability, were set up in more than one hundred locations, representing the interest of employers in their respective region and replacing the 58 regional offices of the former training Agency. [...]

At least two-thirds of the board of directors must be private sector employers at top management level, while the remaining third is made up of personalities from local education, economic development agencies, trade unions or voluntary bodies. TECs cover an average sub-region of approximately one-quarter of a million people and each spend an average of £ 25 million per annum to train young people and adults, to support self-employment, or to stimulate training and improved management by SMEs. In contrast with the previous system, whereby decisions about programmes and levels and the location of funding where made by the Training Agency's Head Office, the allocation of funds is now, in principle, based on three-year corporate plans and one-year business plan drawn up by the TECs. These plans, which are expected to reflect local labour and training needs, and on evaluation of their own performance, as judged against the prescribed objectives.

Regional competitiveness and skill, OECD, 1997 (p. 84-85)

Point of view (Dr. Keith Drake, University of Manchester)

Despite their obvious virtues, TECs have been persistently criticised. They were set up to establish local priorities and cajole local firms to undertake training they would not otherwise carry out. Central government however denied them the autonomy, the compulsory membership of firms, and the revenue-raising powers they would have needed to be effective at doing more than tailoring central government programmes to local circumstances [...]. To implement their human resource development strategy, the regions need far more independent and powerful institutional machinery than agencies of central government who recruit local assistance to improve the effectiveness of programmes. They need the capacity not simply to design but to implement a regional policy grown in the region [...].

Regional competitiveness and skill, OECD, 1997 (p. 116)

Nevertheless, devolution does not mean that the central government will have no further role to play. First, the success of any devolution process necessitates a deep change within the central administration itself. Second, being relieved of most of the planning and implementation tasks, the central government can concentrate on targeting the most handicapped areas and the weakest social groups.

The point of the responsibilities of the State in the framework of a devolution process will be discussed further.

Not surprisingly, it is the opinion of the Committee of Regions that the development of an education-oriented machinery at the regional level "*must at the same time be accompanied by a strengthening of local, and in particular regional administrative arrangements*"[10] and, in the partner countries, linked with the development of local authorities. Although this opinion was given about Tempus and the higher education policy, one may think it may apply in the same way to the vocational education and training policy.

10 *Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 19 November 1998 on the Proposal for a Council Decision adopting the third phase of trans-European cooperation scheme for higher education TEMPUS III (2000- 2006)* (COM(98) 454 final)

4. Regionalisation: a precondition of vocational education and training effectiveness

4.1 Situation and trends in the EU countries

A. Lack of comparative data

Systematic data on vocational education and training are abundant enough but almost exclusively at the national level. The European Commission database does not deliver any reference (from a total of more than 1 million entries) when questioned with the two keywords 'region' and 'training'.

Ten years ago, the Council of Europe carried out a survey on power sharing in education between the State and the sub-national levels. The quality of information was rather poor and the vocational education and training system was not systematically identified. Moreover the data are now too old to be used.

At the beginning of the nineties CEDEFOP published a few regional monographs, but it did not go on in this way.

Such a situation seems to indicate that regions are not seen as relevant level for considering vocational education and training.

B. Regionalising the continuing training system and policy

In the European Union, most Member States have transferred decision-making concerning part of the training system to regional bodies, possibly including the school-based system, the apprenticeship system and the labour market system.

According to a study provided by the PETRA programme, the more common regional management units are what can be called 'regional training councils', which operate through regional training plans. The devolving of responsibility is supposed to render '*training provision more responsive to regional skill requirements*'[11]. These plans are expected to:

- carry out appropriate analyses of the current and expected skills requirements;
- assess the capacity of the current training provision to meet these needs;
- define the training provisions answering these needs.

Beyond that general framework, the patterns are very diverse and useful lessons can be drawn from their assessment. The conclusion seems to be that the more these regional bodies are actually responsible, the more they can be effective[12].

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11 *Responding to new skills needs*. European Commission, 1995 (p. VI)

12 "The effectiveness of regional councils is increased [...] when the devolution of power to the regional level is taken seriously, (if they) have executive powers instead of only an advisory capacity (and) are responsible for their own budget": *Responding to new skills needs*. P. VI.

C. *Various patterns and trends in initial education*

With regard to the initial education the situation is even more diverse within the European Union. The respective remits of the State and regions depend on the type of vocational education and the aspects of the vocational education and training system in question. As a general rule, the role of the State is more important concerning regulations (certification, for example) than for funding. (See Box 4).

The case of apprenticeship is very interesting in this regard and the regional authorities consider that the devolution of that form of training to regions is particularly relevant[13]. In point of fact, not only skill requirements and the training provision are linked to the characteristics of the region: the success of any apprenticeship programme also depends on the firms' willingness to contribute to training and to provide jobs. On their side, the regional authorities have to equip and staff vocational schools. Agreements between firms and authorities can be negotiated for schemes fitting the local/regional needs and opportunities.

Certification and funding of initial vocational education and training in the European Union

Certification is the recognition of skills and competences of individuals through the award of a formal qualification. The allocation of responsibility for certification is important given that it is essential to ensure that the skills and competences certified are relevant to the occupation concerned, and to the needs of the labour market.

In the majority of EU members, certification is carried out by organisations at national level. However the type of national organisation differs.

In Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Sweden, certification is the responsibility of the appropriate central government. This is often done in consultation with other organisations at national level, for example, the social partners, voluntary organisations and representatives of private sector employers. In the UK, certification is the responsibility of independent national Awarding Bodies covering different occupations. In Belgium and Germany, certification is the responsibility respectively of the Communities and the Länder. In Germany, the Länder also consult with the social partners at this level.

In contrast to the arrangements for certification, organisations at regional level play a more prominent role as sources of finance for initial vocational education and training. However, although regional organisations play an active role as sources of finance, their funds may be allocated to them by central governments authorities.

In Belgium and Sweden, the principal source of finance are local public authorities (Communities in Belgium). In Germany, most of the training undertaken is financed jointly by the public authorities and the private sector at regional level. In the UK, central funds are allocated to local bodies to fund initial vocational education and training programmes, with local employers also making a significant contribution.

In France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Finland and the UK, organisations at both national and regional level act as sources of funding for initial vocational education and training programmes.

In Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal, national organisations including central public authorities, social partners and representatives of private sectors are the principal sources of funding for initial vocational education and training programmes.

Key data on vocational training in the European Union. European Commission, 1997

13 Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 12 March 1998 on the Communication from the Commission on Promoting an apprenticeship training in Europe (COM (1997) 300 final) and on the Draft Decision of the Council on the Promotion of European pathways for work-linked training and apprenticeship (COM(97) 572 final - 97/0321 (SYN))

4.2 *EU policy and its current evolution*

A. No apparent priority given to the vocational education and training regional approach in EU literature

The above-mentioned study of the PETRA programme considers the regional level as relevant for '*responding to the new skills needs*'. A normal bibliographical research does not reveal any other official documents of the European Commission on the subject. It does not mean that it is not a matter of interest. It could nevertheless be interpreted as a lack of priority given to the regional approach of vocational education and training.

B. The region as framework for the financial implementation of the ESF

Practically, the situation is far more complex. One of the main EU instruments for promoting vocational education and training among the EU members, the European Social Fund, is operated mainly at the regional level. Out of the total level of resources allocated to the ESF for the six-year period 1994-1996 (EUR 42 billion), about 58% are allocated to regional programmes, mainly under Objective 1.

It does not necessarily give the regions the control of the allocated funds, since in most cases, the country management of ESF is at State level.

Nevertheless, the 1998 ESF Congress[14] admitted on the one hand that, in Objective 1 programmes, tailor-made actions must be developed to suit the conditions particular to each area and, on the other hand, that "*it is vital to guarantee a high degree of complementarity between economic and social measures and to ensure that ESF measures have a multiplier effect*".

C. Structural Funds 2000-2006: the region role confirmed

From 2000, Objective 1 will be maintained, while Objective 2 and 5b will be merged into a new Objective 2. For these objectives, "*the Commission recommends implementing a single programme or SPD for every NUTS II region*"[15].

Such a recommendation indicates two things: first, all Structural Funds will be operated within a single integrated programme; second, the programming will be made at the regional level.

It is coherent with the principles of Funds integration and of subsidiarity.

D. The pressure of the Committee of Regions and OECD experts

For that subsidiarity reason, the regional and local authorities are asking for "*greater role in the granting of Structural Fund aid*", in particular "*in the definition, management, evaluation and supervision of these measures, in partnership with all the players involved*".[16]

This point of view is supported by OECD experts who consider that the measures designed and implemented at the regional level are more effective. That would be the case for measures aimed at training unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups. Generally speaking, the outcomes of

14 Birmingham, 26-28 May 1998. See: *ESF InfoReview n° 6.*

15 European Commission EC Structural Funds. *Proposed regulations...*, p. 15

16 Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 19 December 1998 on the Communication from the Commission to the Member States on the links between regional and competition policy: Reinforcing concentration and mutual consistency.

nationally tailored measures prove to be rather disappointing. This relative failure would be due to the lack of cooperation with employers and other actors (chambers of commerce, unions, etc.). Better cooperation would have resulted in a better knowledge of the local/regional opportunities and a greater involvement of stakeholders[17].

4.3 *Situation and trends in partner countries*

A. *Initial situation: vocational education and training centralised organisation*

Formerly, in the partner countries, the public power organisation was centralised in nature. Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia adopted a federal status. But it was an exception. In most of the other countries, decentralisation was not regarded as a priority compared with building a democratic State and a market economy. The vocational education and training sector was centrally organised and managed.

That clearly emerges from the *Reports on the vocational education and training system* prepared by the National Observatories and published by the European Training Foundation from 1996 to 1998. As a general rule, initial vocational education was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and centrally managed by it. Indeed in many countries, there were territorial educational units, but they worked mainly as just executors of central policy. The training and in particular retraining of unemployed people was dependent upon the Ministry of Labour and there were locally based labour offices, which generally had a degree of autonomy in implementing the central State policy.

B. *Regionalising the training policy: a general trend*

The reports given by the representatives of five partner countries[18] at the Paris Seminar clearly indicate that the situation has changed very quickly in the space of two years (See the Box 5 above). A decentralised system is already working in one country (Poland). Slovenia should follow very soon. Others are on the way to doing the same and most of the remaining others are organising their training and retraining system on a regionalised basis.

During the discussion, references were made also to the cases of Hungary and the Czech Republic. Besides, the expert knows about other situations, including Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania.

With the exception of Mongolia, which unfortunately experienced an unrestrained decentralisation process, in all examined countries there are currently at least projects and/or debates on the regional question and the devolution of part of central powers to local/regional communities. It is a recent move, but one which is gathering momentum.

17 Regional competitiveness and skills, OECD, 1997 (p. 51-52)

18 Seven countries were represented in the Subgroup B: Albania, Latvia, Mongolia, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovenia and Uzbekistan. The members from Albania and Uzbekistan could not participate in the Paris seminar. The list of Subgroup B members is given in Appendix A

Recent trends in vocational education and training territorial organisation in five partner countries

Latvia: small country (2.5 million inhabitants); member of the first group of acceding states; vocational education and training system centrally managed; recent establishment of tripartite council at national level; planned creation of training centres at the regional level.

Mongolia: large country sparsely populated; after the communist regime collapsed, responsibility for the educational system was given to the local communities; it resulted in closing a significant number of schools; hence the return to a centrally managed system.

Poland: 38,6 million inhabitants, 312.677 km²; a complete reform of the public powers occurred on January, 1 1999; the reform of the educational system is to come in 1999; the main responsibility for the first and second level of education has been given to counties (poviats) and the planning and programming competence to regions (voivodships).

Russian Federation: 147 million inhabitants, 17 million km²; deeply decentralised federal system combined; ownership and funding capacity determine the concrete sharing of vocational education and training responsibilities between the federal, regional and local authorities; hence complex situations resulting in specific 'arrangements'; tendency towards more decentralisation; current debate on what should remain under the central responsibility.

Slovenia: 2 million inhabitants, 20,273 km²; centrally managed vocational education and training system with new structures at the regional level; planned regional reform, which would give ten or so regional communities a significant degree of competence and autonomy (elected bodies and fiscal incomes).

As can be seen, the vocational education and training decentralisation process experienced by the partner countries is a very complex one. It results from different motivations. The prominent one may have been the willingness to sweep out the former centralised system and weaken the central State by transferring as many responsibilities as possible to sub-national communities and the private sector. A more practical reason was the deficit of the state budget, vocational education and training responsibilities being devolved to local communities and regions without the corresponding means. Lastly, the pressure of the European Commission encouraging the national authorities to fasten the decentralisation process may have played an important role.

In several cases, the results have not been as postive as had been expected. It may be explained by the lack of sufficient resources at the regional level. But a more structural reason is the fact there is no clear commitment of the State as guarantor with regard to the coherence of the system[19].

C. *Managing the demand and organising the market supply*

In most cases, the local/regional state units that are responsible for training and retraining focus on managing the training demand and organising the market training supply (coming as well from the public as the private sector).

In some cases, they have to compensate the lack of supply and establish new training institutions.

D. *Developing social dialogue and partnership at the regional level*

Several partner countries are experiencing so-called tripartite vocational education and training councils. Their role may differ from one country to another: social dialogue, policy coordination, planning responsibilities. In some cases, these councils have been also established at the regional level. That is in particular the case of Slovenia. (See Box 6 below).

19 Inge Weilnböck-Buck, Bernd Baumgartl, Ton Farla, 'Les défis de la formation professionnelle dans les pays d'Europe centrale et orientale' in *Formation professionnelle. Revue européenne*. N° 11, août 1997. CEDEFOP.

Case study: Regional Councils for vocational education and training in Slovenia

Origin

In 1996, the Phare programme for the reconstruction of vocational education and training in Slovenia proposed to develop a social partnership model in vocational education and training on the regional level. Four regions were selected: Gorenjska, Podravje, Zasavje and Savinjsko-Šaleška Region. The first meeting of the representatives of the regions decided to establish Regional Councils for vocational education and training.

Composition

Representatives of employers (SMEs, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chamber of Crafts), representatives of employees, representatives of vocational schools and of the public and private training providers for adults, representatives of local authorities and of Regional Offices of the National Employment Office of Slovenia.

Remits (as defined by the regional councils)

1. Implementing the new Vocational and Professional Education Act: tasks of social partners, introducing a dual system, practical education carried out by employers.
2. Human resource development and raising of the level of competitiveness
3. Establishing links between education and the labour market
4. Determining the need for adult education and training.

Current limitations

- Lack of legislative basis for partnership-based bodies
- Insufficient financial resources
- Weak coordination between national and regional tools
- Need for linking the activities of Regional Councils for vocational education and training with relevant institutions for employment and human resources development in the region

Source: Vladimir Tkalec, Report to Subgroup B

E. Searching for coherence in State and regional policies

Poland has already adopted a regionalised system since January 1 1999, when the new law on power devolution entered into force, with the creation of a new territorial self-government: the new voivodship. There are sixteen voivodships in the country with an average population of 2,4 million. Their main competence covers "*the regional development policy programmes whose primary purpose is to ensure that the country's human and material capital is put to the best use*"[20]. Voivodship self-government has therefore the responsibility for the planning and programming process, regional development being dealt within all its aspects: economy and employment, education and training, infrastructure and equipment, science and technology, culture and social welfare.

The national coherence between the sixteen expected regional programmes should be performed through 'regional agreements' between the central government and each voivodship self-government (inspired from the Contrat de Plan Etat-Région that have been operating in France since 1983).

Sooner or later, in most partner countries, the regionalisation process will likely result in giving increased responsibilities to regional bodies, with large policy responsibilities, generally including vocational education and training.

20 *Effectiveness, openness, subsidiarity. A new Poland for new challenge.* Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland. Warsaw. 1997 (p. 16)

These bodies will be competent for development programming and programme implementation. The search for the most effective use of public money will push them to seek the most effective combination of all public schemes, such as building infrastructure, supporting SMEs and promoting vocational education and training. Therefore, integrating human resources development with economic development will be made at the regional level under the general responsibility of a more or less autonomous regional body.

There are two main problems that these bodies will face at this juncture: on the one hand a clear-cut definition of the respective remits of the State and the regions and on the other the coherence between the State and regions' vocational education and training systems and policies.

4.4 *Specific issues for Acceding Countries*

A. *Autonomous regions and programming regions*

As said before, the Structural Funds will be operated through Objective 1 regional programmes. The Acceding Countries are therefore required to define regions able to elaborate and implement development programmes. From the experience of Member States, the European Commission considers that development programming requires an surface area relatively large in size, population and revenue.

Poland has already conformed to these requirements. In other countries, the situation is more complex. The Czech Republic, for example, has created 14 regions, most of them with less than 1 million inhabitants. It was asked by the EU to regroup several of them to reach the total number of eight programming areas for pre-accession and Structural Funds intervention. A similar situation exists in Hungary.

Such a solution cannot be considered as completely satisfactory since it will separate the geographical level of programming from the territorial level of political power with the consequence that the legitimacy of the programming decisions could in future be regarded as questionable.

B. *Preparing the Regional Operational Programmes*

Since now, the acceding countries have to prepare programmes at the regional level (Regional Operational Programmes) to operate the Phare pre-accession funds. These programmes shall include all the main priorities of regional development, including competitiveness, employment, skills and training. Consequently, the countries must define at the regional level the specific needs and demands, and elaborate the corresponding measures.

As integrated programmes, the ROPs prefigure the Objective 1 programmes, which will operate as soon as the accession will be effective.

4.5 *Types of processes of regionalisation*

A. *Diversity of situations and trends*

Subsidiarity, that is the devolution of power to the level of the citizen in the absence of justifiable reasons for its attribution to a higher level, appears to be a general trend, an answer to the common aspiration for increased democracy. This aspiration is all the more strong in that in this case it

concerns policies (employment and the factors providing access to jobs) directly affecting the everyday life of people.

From the experience available, one must however accept the idea that there is no unique political and legal process that leads a country from centralised to decentralised rule. It depends upon factors as diverse as the history surrounding the establishment of a country, the relations with neighbouring countries, the common conception of the State, the position of minorities with a State, the degree of social cohesion, disparities in development, interests of particular social groups, etc. A more immediate role may be played by factors such as the ideology of the ruling class and pressure from foreign assistance.

The definition of the region for vocational education and training policy cannot obviously be the same for countries as different as, say, Russia and Slovenia.

One must accept that the size of regions, the number of local levels of autonomy, the field of competence and the grade of each level of autonomy can differ according to the national context (geography, history, culture, ethnical structure, political situation, etc.).

It would be therefore dangerous to propose a **unique** regional pattern which can (or must) be used everywhere.

B. Devolution, a complex and possibly long process

Main human and institutional obstacles to be overcome:

In most countries, vocational education and training decentralisation does not appear to be a natural tendency of central institutions. The resistance comes from the members of these institutions, who can feel themselves threatened by the reduction of competence at central level. Such individuals may be deprived of some of their power, their independence could be reduced, and they could even lose their job. All these arguments feed the usual strong opposition against the devolution to regions of the vocational education and training system, in particular the school-based component (See Appendix V).

There will not be any change if these problems are not taken into consideration. If no compensation is offered to the concerned people (not necessarily in material terms but rather in terms of providing different, more interesting work) then change will be compromised. Reform can succeed only with the cooperation of the people concerned. It has to be presented to them as a challenge they must take up.

In any case, the supporters of the regionalisation have a difficult task in convincing the responsible people and, more generally, public opinion. Their struggle can be a long one. Even after the reform has been implemented, any deficiency of the new system can be used as an argument by the central institu-tions to return to the previous system instead of helping the regions to overcome difficulties.

Regionalisation is rooted in the subsidiarity principle, which can be seen an aspect of democracy. As such, it is a process and a struggle. No situation is fixed forever. There is no natural evolution.

Several examples can demonstrate this. The French and the Italian cases deserve, for distinct reasons, to be recalled.

France: a long drawn out evolution

The modern idea of regions was born in France after the Second World War. But the regionalisation process only really got going in 1982, when the Decentralisation Act created the regions as autonomous communities.

The 1982 Act gave the regions clear remits in the field of training. Nevertheless, they had to share this responsibility with the State administration until the Five-Years Act on Employment and Vocational Training (1993).

From the French case, one can observe how long and complex the decentralisation process can be in a country with a longstanding tradition of centralisation. (See Box 7 below).

Decentralisation in France: an example of a long-running process

Main steps

1871. The *Préfet*, appointed by the government as head of the *Département* administration, is placed under the supervision of an elected assembly, the *Conseil général*.

1956. Creation of 21 regional areas of economic programming within the national framework plan. Elaboration of regional development programmes.

1966. Institution of a consultative body in each of the 21 regional areas.

1969. Referendum on the creation of regions and reform of the Senate. The proposal is rejected.

1982. Creation of regions with the 1956 delimitation. They are ruled by an elected assembly (*Conseil régional*) and a *Président* chosen by the assembly.

1984. First *Contrats de Plan État-Région* (state-region planning agreements), which fix the joint commitments of the State and regions for five years in all fields of common competence, including vocational education and training.

Vocational education and training decentralisation

Decentralisation Act 1982.

Secondary vocational education. The State appoints and pays teachers, and fixes the general pedagogical framework. Regions are responsible for secondary education infrastructure and investment. They elaborate an educational plan.

Apprenticeship and training. Regions elaborate a regional programme, whose implementation is shared between the State and regions.

Five-Years Act on Employment and Vocational Training 1993

National norms and standards are designed at national level with the participation of the social partners. The regions have an increased authority on the vocational education and training regional system (school-based initial training, apprenticeship training and continuing vocational education and training) in order to adapt it for promoting employment and development. With the aim to mobilise most available resources in that direction, vocational education and training regional plans are designed jointly by the region and the State.

Italy: the coexistence of systems

In Italy, the 1996-98 legislation confirmed the competence of regions in the field of training and retraining and extended their powers over employment and training (See Box 8 below).

But at the same time it gave the State the right to substitute those regions, which do not apply the law because of the lack of political capacity and therefore do not give their citizens equal training opportunities compared with other regions. In such regions, the State will substitute the region in applying directly the law by its own means.

Elsewhere, the regions are increasing the effectiveness of the regional vocational education and training system by redefining the expected results of the programmes and introducing the private sector in the provision of training, together with the school system, which therefore loses its monopolistic position.

The general framework (guidelines, procedures) is designed at the national level following an agreement by the social partners according to the Employment Pact 1996.

'Participatory planning' and 'area agreements' are progressively introduced in order to improve the coordination between administrations at different levels and to commit together the public and the private sector.

Case study: Recent changes in the vocational training system in Italy

1. Since 1978, regional training activities were given a pivotal role between schools and the working world, through a very flexible planning model with ad hoc courses fitting the findings of the needs analyses (under the responsibility of Regions, with social partners agreement). In fact, activities were run in a much more academic way, with repeated courses taught by permanent teachers who were often regional employees.
2. More recently and to some extend to meet criteria of the European Social Fund and Community regulations on competition, there has been an upturn in the training planning model based on "design" and flexibility. The social partners were also playing a greater role in needs analysis and the planning activities, ongoing and ex-post evaluations of initiatives are also increasing.
3. In 1997-98, the Regions have got exclusive powers over the planning process. Regions are therefore responsible for:
   - analysing needs,
   - identifying medium and long term objectives,
   - formulating development policies, and
   - drawing up plans of training activities.
4. Lastly the devolution process has made it possible to give other regional and local partners an active role in the new planning process. The decentralisation of regional functions has already been envisaged in the outline law. Further impetus came from the Law 142 on the reform of local authorities, which identified provinces as the prime mover for a number of sectors including vocational training. This decentralisation is an attempt to find a way of linking vocational training as closely as possible to the dynamics of the labour market. The possibility of pooling information at provincial level is becoming a strategic factor in consistent planning.

Source: Giorgio Allulli, Report to Subgroup B

The general lesson of the current Italian experience is that necessary though the regionalisation is, it cannot perform miracles by itself. Its effectiveness depends in particular on the political willingness and the technical and financial capacities of the regions. For these reasons, regionalisation does not exempt the State of any responsibility.

4.6 *Power-sharing between the State and the region*

A. Principles

This point was repeatedly raised by the Subgroup members during the Paris seminar, most of them being concerned by two main questions: what responsibility has to remain with the State in the new or future decentralised context?; what processes must be followed to perform the regionalisation of the vocational education and training system?

From the debate emerged a broad consensus on the sharing out of responsibility, which should be based on the principle that the vocational education and training system is comprised of two

components: a hard core and a second more flexible part. The hard core may be kept in the hands of the central State while the whole flexible part can be decentralised.

Regarding regionalisation, the seminar's opinion was that it can be achieved through deconcentration and decentralisation and that the devolution of decision-making and corresponding resources to sub-national level, when possible, is the most effective way.

But the main point to be considered is that the sharing of responsibilities and resources of each partner - the State and the region - must be as clear-cut and coherent as possible and, as a result, there must be as few as possible grey areas as to fields of competence that could, in turn, lead to conflict.

B. Role of central authorities

The hard core is formed of all the means that are necessary to secure the transparency, quality and equity of the vocational education and training system.

The transparency is secured on the one hand by the regulations and procedures concerning accreditation and recognition and on the other by the collection and dissemination of data concerning the system on the whole national territory.

The quality of the outcomes of the system necessitates the definition of basic standards and/or procedures concerning the content of training, the trainers qualifications and the credibility of training institutions.

Equity can be reached by guaranteeing the same training opportunities throughout the country; it is an important factor of social cohesion at all geographical levels; it may be achieved by compensatory funding, technical assistance to the regions, or substitution in case of structural deficiency of a region.

The decisions concerning these responsibilities should commit the social partners and the regions through formal consultations.

Some of them can be subcontracted without however reducing the State's responsibility.

C. Role of the region

The regionalised part of the training and retraining system consists of the adaptation to the requirements and opportunities of the region, the administrative management of the system, including the public provision of training.

Adapting the vocational education and training system to the region profile can be achieved by:

- assessing the requirements and opportunities (current and future);
- planning and programming the training provision and integrating it within regional development programmes;
- searching for all possible synergies with other components of human resources and economic development;
- adapting to some extent the national standards to meet the specific needs of the region;
- proceeding to the necessary assessment and evaluations.

The management of the vocational education and training system at regional level means that the region has authority and responsibility for:

- maintaining and improving the facilities and equipment;
- giving the teachers and staff of the public training institutions the best working conditions;
- providing the training courses in the public training institutions;
- committing the social partners and the other major regional actors;
- mobilising all the regional resources, including the training capacities of firms.

Concerning the provision of training by the private sector the normal role of the region should be to secure the normal observance of the competition rules and the transparent information of the users.

Nevertheless, the regional authority can extend the regulations and standards of the public sector to the private sector since the training firms are subsidised for implementing the regional training programme.

D. Regionalisation process

Transferring the implementation of training measures implementation the closest to the concerned citizen can be achieved according two main ways: deconcentration and decentralisation.

Handing down the State's administration of vocational education and training means creating local/regional units for implementing policy and giving these units the necessary capacity and means to achieve greater effectiveness of the training provision.

Case study: Lessons from the Irish experience on training deconcentrated management

From the lessons of the Irish experience, the devolution of the vocational education and training policy to the level of regional self-government in practice involves, at least partly, the following elements:

(i) the gathering of information concerning the market and a research system to assess market needs and training provision;

(ii) dialogue and cooperation with employers, trade-unions, development agencies, educational establishments and other structures;

(iii) the ability to propose and provide advice for the producing, revising and updating of training curricula;

(iv) the competence to constantly evaluate the regional vocational education and training system and policy;

(v) the presence of administrative machinery able to receive and record applications for training, to liaise with the social assistance system to call persons for training, to keep all records of training, testing and certification and to follow this up with ex-trainees and keep records of progression following the training;

(vi) an account system to pay expenses including (possibly) staff salaries, overheads, trainee allowances and other direct costs;

(vii) a planning and management system to produce budgets/plans and on-going reports of performance versus previously agreed plan;

(viii) the full set of accompanying services, such as canteen, cleaning, maintenance, medical/first aid, welfare, guidance and counselling, internal audit, etc., in the event that they are not private.

Source: From a note proposed by Pat Nealon after the Paris seminar (April 14, 1999)

A good example could be taken from the Irish Training & Employment Authority (FAS). Its regional units perform the following tasks:

- assessing current and foreseeable needs
- designing the training programme for the following year and defining the necessary means;
- mobilising the regional partnerships;
- after agreement by the FAS national authority, implementation of the programme, including its financial aspects;
- giving reports on the implementation and the results of the programme.

Case study: Organisation of the apprenticeship system in Austria[21]

Federal Level

Ministry for Economic Affairs

- Vocational Training Act
- List of apprenticeship trades
- Training and examination regulations

Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship

- Preparation of regulations for each apprenticeship trade
- Advisory work for the Ministry for Economic Affairs

Employers' and workers' organisations

- Clarify their interests within the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
- Prepare expert opinions within the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship

Ministry for Education

- School Organisation Act
- Framework syllabi for part-time vocational schools
- School Tuition Act, Compulsory School Act, School Time Act

Provincial Level

Provincial government office

- Apprenticeship authority at the second level
- Decision on appeals concerning apprenticeship training matters and cancellation of illegally registered apprenticeship training-agreements
- Appointment of Chairmen/women of final apprenticeship examination commissions
- Nomination of com-missions for apprenticeship trainer examinations

Provincial Advisory Board on Apprenticeship

- Representatives of employers' and workers' organisations
- Advisory body on apprenticeship matters at provincial level

continues

21 Source: Wolfgang Lentsch. Report to the Subgroup. See also: *Apprenticeship, vocational education and training in Austria*. Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs. 1998 (Edited by W. Lentsch)

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Provincial Level

Apprenticeship offices

- Set up at the Provincial Chambers of Economy
- Apprenticeship authority at the first level
- Examination of suitability of training enterprises (personal and technical aspects)
- Checking and registration of apprenticeship training-agreements
- Secretariat of the Provincial Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
- Advice for training enterprises
- Advice for apprentices

Provincial government office

- Provinces provide half of the costs of teachers (the Federal government covers the other half)

Provincial School Board

- Setting up, equipping and maintaining part-time vocational schools (machines, tools, teaching aids)
- Organising and adapting federal framework syllabi
- Educational and technical supervision particularly by Provincial Vocational School Inspectors

Local Level

Training enterprises

- Providers of apprenticeship training
- Education and training according to apprenticeship training regulations

Apprenticeship counsellors

- Appointed for various branches to give advice to training enterprises
- In cooperation with the Provincial Advisory Board on Apprenticeship to initiate and stimulate appropriate enterprise-based education and training programmes
- Promote good relationships between training enterprises and part-time vocational schools

Part-time vocational schools

- Provide tuition to supplement and promote enterprise-based training technically and theoretically
- Deepen and complete general education

Headmasters and teachers in part-time vocational schools

- Generally holders of a mastership certificate or a leaving certificate of a full-time vocational school with additional professional experience
- Graduates from an Academy for Vocational Pedagogy

Decentralisation can be achieved through the devolution of responsibilities and corresponding measures (legal basis, competent staff and tax-based budget, in particular) to self-governments at a lower level. The process must give the regions a true autonomy, that is to say the capability to negotiate, to some extent, as an equal with the State.

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Training and retraining belong to policies that can be transferred effectively from the State to regions (for the reasons presented above). If their competence includes economic development, regions can elaborate and implement regional development programmes combining various economic and social aspects, including employment policy and training and retraining schemes.

Intermediate situations include agreements negotiated with local firms and training institutions by the regional State, the creation of advisory bodies. They also include the case of elected bodies with very limited competence and means apart from powerful state representatives, and the coexistence of autonomous regions with areas under direct rule of the State.

Generally, these situations represent stages of the decentralisation process.

Besides, deconcentration and decentralisation can be distinct processes or combined ones.

The Austrian experience concerning apprenticeship indicates that even in federal systems, the apprenticeship system may be under the general responsibility of the State, while nevertheless the regional governments and the local partners have to play a significant role (See Box 10 above).

Regionalisation can be achieved through deconcentration and decentralisation.

Decentralisation can be achieved through the devolution of responsibilities and corresponding measures (legal basis, competent staff and tax-based budget, in particular) to self-governments at a lower level. The process must give the regions a true autonomy, that is to say the capability to negotiate, to some extend, as an equal with the State.

As a process, regionalisation will usually be progressive, which may materialise in two possible ways:

- during an intermediary period decentralisation and deconcentration can be processed more or less simultaneously with a partial devolution of the flexible part to the regional self-government and a broad autonomy given to the regional units of the State administration;
- one or a few regions could be chosen as a pilot and receive all necessary means to make it a success and demonstrate the feasibility of the reform.

To be successful, the regionalisation process must give the regions, means corresponding to the devolved competencies. They include management capacity, appropriate training capacity, financial resources, partnership and social dialogue, and technical support from the central administration. (See Appendix D).

E. Organising the coherence of the vocational education and training system and policy

The partnership principle shall apply to the Region and the State in the case of regional autonomy and the shared competence on training of the State and the Region.

Insofar as each one has its specific training policy, the solution can be agreements on common programmes with a clear definition of objectives, measures, costs and resources.

In Germany, for instance, the Federal State and the Länder created special Commissions for education programming and research promotion on the one hand and for planning higher education new facilities on the other.

State-Region agreements can be extended to the different sectors and result in a global state-region agreement on common regional development programmes. That at least is the method France has opted for with the five years *Contrats de Plan État-Région*.

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1. *Members of Subgroup B*
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1. *Members of Subgroup B*

Country / Organisation	Member of Subgroup B	Participation at the Paris Seminar
Austria	Mr. Wolfgang Lentsch	Mr. Wolfgang Lentsch
Ireland	Mr. Pat Nealon	Mr. Pat Nealon
Italy	Ms. Analisa Vittore	Mr. Giorgio Allulli
France	Mr. Pierre Caspar	Mr. Pierre Caspar
ILO	Mr. Nikolaï Petrov	Mr. Nikolaï Petrov
Albania	Mr. Eduard Prodani	
Latvia		Ms Grieta Tentere
Poland	Mr. Jaroslav Tyc	Mr. Jaroslav Tyc
Slovenia	Mr. Vladimir Tkalec	Mr. Vladimir Tkalec
Mongolia	Ms Nyamaa Oyunchimeg	Mr. Ulzümend Ganbold
Russia	Mr. Yuri Zabrodin	Mr. Yuri Zabrodin
Uzbekistan	Mr Batyr Alimukhamedov	

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2. *EC recommendations on regional training councils*

Regional Training Councils: conditions for better effectiveness

The effectiveness of regional councils is increased if they:

- function in a 'region friendly' political climate, in other words when the devolution of power to the regional level is taken seriously;
- are responsible for a 'self contained' labour market, allowing them to define their area of responsibility clearly;
- have executive powers, instead of only an advisory capacity;
- are responsible for their own budget;
- bring together decision-makers from the relevant parties;
- have a wide remit, covering as many systems for initial and continuing training as possible;
- can rely upon up-to-date information and expert support.

Responding to new skills needs - a regional perspective Contribution to the PETRA Programme. European Commission, 1995 (p. VI)

3. *Typologies of power sharing in education and vocational education and training*

A. *Competences and roles of the different levels*

OECD proposes a typology regarding the sharing of responsibilities between the different levels and the specific role of each one.

The first one considers territorial organisation for human resource development from two angles: the existence of a national (federal) framework and the role of regions in its implementation[22]. It results in a three category typology:

- Totally decentralised, with no involvement of the national (federal) level, or national framework (Canada, USA)
- Partly decentralised, with national framework, involvement of the national (federal level) and significant role for regions in the implementation
- Well established system (Austria, Denmark, Germany)
- Recent changes (Australia, France)
- Centralised with national framework and no role for regions in its implementation (Japan, Portugal)

B. *Taking into account situations and changes*

The Council of Europe adopts the same point of view, but it goes further. In its 1996 report on the division of responsibilities at the national, regional and local levels in the education systems of twenty-three European countries, it examines several criteria (administrative and financial competence, funding, schools opening and closing, teachers appointment and salaries, content of learning) from which it suggests the following typology[23]:

1. The predominantly centralised systems:

   a) Strongly centralised systems: Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Malta, and The Netherlands,

1 Regional competitiveness and skill, 1997 (p. 55)
2 Anne Van Haecht, Council of Europe. 1996 (pp. 21-31)

b) Centralised countries with a propensity for deconcentration: Czech Republic, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Turkey;

2. Centralised countries with tendency to decentralisation: Austria, Finland, France, Poland, and Spain;

3. Predominantly decentralised countries: Belgium (French Community), Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland.

The country classification is based upon a 1992-93 survey and needs to be updated. On the other hand, it concerns the whole education system and not specifically the vocational education and training one. Nevertheless, there are two possible understandings of the typology. One leads to the conclusion that the centralised system is without any doubt the prominent one. Also it can be seen that most of the countries had a decentralised system or tendency towards decentralisation or at least deconcentration.

In fact, what is interesting about this typology is that it is specifically designed not to limit itself to the existing situation, but to also take into account the direction of occurring changes.

C. *Analysing in-depth the vocational education and training system*

OECD has made the attempt to propose a more sophisticated typology. It groups the countries *"according to the coherence and the flexibility of their human resources development practices"*[24].

Two categories are distinguished concerning the human resource development system.

- Coherence depending from the acceptance of national norms and standards, the integration of the whole educational system and the involvement of the social partners. Flexibility is limited because of the strong interdependence of the different components and the difficulties of changing due to the negotiation process. *"Most of the Anglo-Saxon countries could be grouped under this category"*.
- Coherence depending on nationally accepted norms and recognition mechanisms. Flexibility is linked to decentralisation mechanisms with regions' policies and programmes. *"Germany and France illustrate [this] dynamic based on coherence"*.

This typology is a very interesting attempt to go beyond the division of responsibilities and to consider the way the system operates. However, it needs to take into account a large number of criteria, some of which are not easy to assess.

D. *Linking the regional approach of training and retraining with the way the regional policy is ruled*

It could be useful to consider another type of classification of the vocational education and training systems linking the regional approach to training and retraining with the way the regional policy is ruled.

It necessitates assessing the relationship between regional development policy and training and retraining policy. This cross analysis will lead to 25 theoretical categories (See the table below)

24 Regional competitiveness and skill, 1997 (p. 49-50)

Regional development policy	Regional approach to training and retraining				
	None	Centralised	Deconcentrated	Intermediate	Decentralised
None	(I)	(VI)	(XI)	(XVI)	(XXI)
Centralised	(II)	(VII)	(XII)	(XVII)	(XXII)
Deconcentrated	(III)	(VIII)	(XIII)	(XVIII)	(XXIII)
Intermediate	(IV)	(IX)	(XIV)	(XIX)	(XXIV)
Decentralised	(V)	(X)	(XV)	(XX)	(XXV)

Linking the regional approach to training and retraining with how the regional development policy is ruled has two main justification.

- Decentralising to some extent the training and retraining system is easier in a region-friendly context and therefore in countries where the decentralisation of the regional development policy has already been achieved.
- Integrating the vocational education and training policies into complex and synergetic regional programmes is only possible if the regional development policy itself is sufficiently decentralised.

It could be interesting to place all the partner countries within the table and to update it periodically. It would result in a tableau-de-bord (display) giving a global view of the situation and the possibility of following developments. Unfortunately, the relevant sources are not sufficiently available to complete the table, so that it can only be used as a method of analysing the situation of each country and its evolution.

4. *Conditions of an effective vocational education and training regionalisation*

A. Management capacity

Management capacity may be achieved through voluntary moves of State officials, and through training for the management of regional development, including planning and programming, negotiation and partnership, project design and implementation, monitoring and policy evaluation.

In the Polish case, not only the labour and employment competence is transferred to the poviats, but also the whole apparatus, including the managers and employees.

B. Appropriate training capacity

At least for the more usual and/or specific training requirements, there is a need for regional providers, some of them being under the direct responsibility of the regional authority. That can lead to create new training institutions as it should be the case for Slovenia. The question of using the existing structures, qualifications, and facilities or creating new ones was a debated topic at the Paris seminar.

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C. Financial resources

The region must be able to fund its vocational education and training system and its vocational education and training programmes by resources coming from its own budget, a substantial part of which should arise from regional taxes created by the national fiscal legislation. The weakness of the Russian regionalised system comes in particular from the lack of regional resources that are secured and independent. That seems to be the case of almost all the partner countries. That is even a matter of concern for the new voivodship authorities in Poland. Only from a stable financial base, is the region able to negotiate the provision of external resources secured by contract with the State or other institution (European Union, IMF) as well as bank resources (training being regarded as an investment).

D. Partnership

Many partner countries (Estonia, Russia, Slovenia, for example) are setting up consultative bodies, regional as well as national, with the participation of local communities, business representatives and trade unions.

As a matter of fact, the region is the natural level for partnership. The regional government must facilitate and negotiate the involvement of social partners and enterprises, in particular the commitment of local firms in apprenticeship and other alternate forms of training and that of unions in defining the needs of workers and job seekers.

E. Technical support

Even in countries with a long experience of regionalisation, like Italy, some regions have not all the appropriate capacity for elaborating and implementing effective vocational education and training programmes.

The central administration therefore must offer to them its technical assistance during an intermediary period. In particularly dramatic situations, it could be led to use an 'interference right' to secure the equity of the vocational education and training provision and the social cohesion throughout the country.

5. Bringing decision-making closer to the problems and actors: advantages and difficulties

A regional approach of training and retraining policies may have to solve several well-known difficulties, while presenting very notable advantages.

A. Well-known difficulties

Inadequacy of the region as labour market area

- That can be partly true if the region is too small in size; then training and retraining policy must be envisaged at an inter-regional level.
- There are strong obstacles to the manpower mobility, such as culture, habits and the overall lack of housing.

- The training site is not necessarily the employment area: if the new skills aquired are good, the trained people can search for employment everywhere.

Low level of the training supply within the region

- The supply market is not limited to the region; the regional authorities can ask for extra-regional supply.
- This low level may be due to the lack of regional demand and can be progressively raised.

Lack of management capacity at the regional level

- Sometimes that is not true at all; the strongest supporters of a centralised organisation use the argument however.
- In most cases, there are management skills, but the skilled people need to be organised and to experiment working together.
- Nevertheless, training the regional managers of the training and retraining policy must be considered necessary.

Equality principle

In most countries, basic initial education is considered as a right for every citizen and theoretically there must not be differences according to the people location.

Nevertheless, on one hand,

- vocational education must take into account the local and regional opportunities of employment...
- and on the other, training and retraining programmes must be designed to cope with the specific needs resulting from local and regional restructuring and initiatives.

Centralist conception of government

- This is the strongest factor opposing the regional approach of training and retraining since it is a combination of habits, interests and culture.
- Any decentralisation policy will have to overcome such opposition by using both persuasion and authority.
- Nevertheless, the regional approach must not necessarily eliminate any central responsibility (government and administration), regarding orientations, coherence and equity, particularly by co-financing regional programmes.

B. Main advantages

Heterogeneous evolution of economy and employment

- The transition period towards a competitive market economy results in restructuring old activities and creating new ones, which develop diversely according to the regions because of differences in sectoral structure, spirit of enterprise, geographical opportunities, etc.
- Employees and job seekers are strongly marked by the economic activity of past decades and more deeply by the cultural background of the local society.

- Therefore, economic needs and people capacities for training and retraining deeply differ from one region to another.

Management of uncertainty

- Economic and social changes can be anticipated at a macro-economic level with a rather high grade of probability, but become more and more hazardous when considered at much lower level.
- In that context, supplying effective training and retraining services necessitates a deep knowledge of local firms evolution that can result in specific schemes anticipating both lays-off and hiring.
- Only the proximity of firms can give such deep knowledge, in particular thanks to consultative bodies, and allow agreements on anticipated needs for training and retraining as well employees as job-seekers.

Lack of mobility of employees and job seekers

- Employees and job seekers exceptionally can go outside their residence area to satisfy their training or retraining needs.
- Among the training and retraining schemes, they prefer those that give them opportunities for getting any job there.
- Cultural and social reasons make mono-industry regions particularly affected.

Searching an increased economic effectiveness of training and retraining schemes

- The public impulse to development reaches its highest effectiveness through programmes integrating SMEs support, technology transfers, infrastructures enhancement, institution building and human resources development.
- Experience suggests the inadequacy of the national level as well as the local one, the most suitable area being an intermediate one, which more or less correspond with the NUTS II region as defined by Eurostat.

6. *Synthetic assessment of the vocational education and training situation in partner countries*

The table below has been set up from the analysis of the National Observatories Reports on the vocational education and training system.

It is based upon the last published version available at the European Training Foundation in January 1999. The Information should therefore be updated.

All the areas of analysis are not equally covered by each report. Nevertheless, the table shows, on one hand, the diversity of situations and on the other hand the information possibilities offered to European Training Foundation by the National Observatory Network.

Country Area (km²) Popul. (mio)	Territorial administrative structure	Elected self-governments	Autonomy of regional/ local state levels	Involvement of self-governments	Schools autonomy	Addressing the minority problems	Training for public management	Reforms perspectives	Linking training and reg. develop.	Risks of decentra-lisation
Albania 28,748 3.28	37 labour offices Directorate of Education at the regional level Vocational education and training system is centralised	Welfare section of local governments			Vocational schools carry out their activities as separate units		Strengthening the capacity of social adminis-tration through the training of administrators and social workers		Necessary to analyse informa tion on regional development, to give the schools a chance to adapt their programmes	May lead to significant differences between regions and schools
Azerbaijan 86,000 7.2	70 raions Education department on raion level	Local governments 1 autonomous region								
Belarus 208,000 10,1	Regional bodies of education Necessary to transfer more competence									
Bulgaria 110,993 8.38	Labour offices. Regional Inspectorates of Education implement the State policy on vocational education and training. Vocational education and training system is quite centralised	Deconcentra-tion to local levels follows the legal changes, but still low flexibility and responsiveness							Centralised planned economy, but necessity to meet local municipal needs	

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Country Area (km²) Popul. (mio)	Territorial administrative structure	Elected self-governments	Autonomy of regional/ local state levels	Involvement of self-governments	Schools autonomy	Addressing the minority problems	Training for public management	Reforms perspectives	Linking training and reg. develop.	Risks of decentra-lisation
Czech Rep. 78,864 10.3	77 districts with districts authorities, Labour offices and Schools offices LO responsible for training unemployed people	6233 municipalities. Increased delegation of decision-making to municipalities in the field of education. Missing link in vocational education and training management at the regional level	The advisory boards to directors of LO usually includes both representatives of employers (and/or trade unions) as well as educational institutions (and/or School Offices)		Increased independence of schools. Secondary school directors have significant powers	Special employment and education programmes for the Romany population exists in some regions, especially in North Moravia and North Bohemia				
Estonia 45,100 1.53	Current centralised leadership of vocational/ professional education institutions	Low interest of local authorities towards vocational education								
Hungary 93,000 10.0	19 counties and 23 metropolitan counties County employment councils	184 towns, 2921 villages Vocational education and training policies are basically implemented by local authorities	Regional Labour Development and Training Centres react rapidly to local demands							The Szekesfehervar local authority offers both sites and training programmes to companies
Kyrgyzstan 198,500 4.57	Oblast and rayon educational authorities	Involvement of local authorities in funding education								

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Country Area (km²) Popul. (mio)	Territorial administrative structure	Elected self-governments	Autonomy of regional/ local state levels	Involvement of self-governments	Schools autonomy	Addressing the minority problems	Training for public management	Reforms perspectives	Linking training and reg. develop.	Risks of decentra-lisation
Latvia 64,500 2.5		34% vocational education and training budget come from municipalities	Districts have adult education councils							Need for regional policy
Lithuania 65,300 3,7	Districts governed by District Governors. Centralised financing of vocational education and training		Advisory bodies of the local labour market training agencies		Vocational schools would draft their own training curricula					
FYROM 25.713 1.9	Educational system centralised With 35 local offices	123 units of self-government (municipalities)	Responsibilities confined to conveying the policy, strategies and tasks decided by the Ministry							No regional division
Moldova 38,800 4.32	Labour offices 40 districts executive councils	four municipalities, 61 towns, 925 villages	District and municipal direction of education have administrative and consultative councils					Proposed decentralisation of vocational education and training development onto a local and zone level		

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Country Area (km²) Popul. (mio)	Territorial administrative structure	Elected self-governments	Autonomy of regional/ local state levels	Involvement of self-governments	Schools autonomy	Addressing the minority problems	Training for public management	Reforms perspectives	Linking training and reg. develop.	Risks of decentra-lisation
NW Russia ... 7.46	Federal Employment Services managing State Employment Fund	NW Russia consists of 5 autonomous subjects of the Russian Feder.: Republics & regions		Transfer of vocational education and training financial responsibility to regions Possible adapta-tion of federal voca-tional education and training priorities, methods and standards	Schools are able to generate own funding by providing fee-paying services to individuals and organisations				Adaptation of vocational education and training to regional needs. In St. Petersburg, active measures for unemployed people include both training and business support	Contradictions between the Russian Feder. and Rep. of Karelia Laws No legal co-ordination Fed. Employment service and vocational education and training region. Policies
Poland 312,677 38.64	49 voivodships with Labour Offices and Curatoria 356 local labour offices	Gminas	Local and regional Employment Councils Regional Education councils	Contribution of Gminas to funding vocational education and training schools				More vocational education and training remits for Gminas More autonomy for vocational education and training schools Adapting vocational education and training system for increased contribution to region/ country competitiveness	Local labour offices provide both training and support (loans) to self-employment	

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Country Area (km²) Popul. (mio)	Territorial administrative structure	Elected self-governments	Autonomy of regional/ local state levels	Involvement of self-governments	Schools autonomy	Addressing the minority problems	Training for public management	Reforms perspectives	Linking training and reg. develop.	Risks of decentra-lisation
Romania 238,391 22.65	40 judets + City of Bucharest Labour and Social Protection Directorates School Inspectorates Local Labour and Unemploy-ment Offices	67 cities, 182 towns and 2,686 rural communities	On the judet level, the General Inspector is assisted by a Board of Administration and an Advisory Board (with social partnership)		School principals may contract with business					
Russian Fed. 17,075,400 147.1					Supplementar y professional schools may develop their own curricula			Increased independence to the subjects of the Rus. Fed. in vocational education	vocational education and training must help overcoming the consequences in differences in the regional development	Negative consequences of must be overcome
Slovenia 20,273 1.99	Local and regional offices of National Employment Office System of education quite centralised				Schools have a financial autonomy regarding their own resources			Creation of regional school administrative bodies with delegated power	Pilot program me in Maribor linking training and employ ment on the regional level	

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Annex
Training and development of vulnerable areas: *Regional and local approach*

Advisory Forum – Sub-group B

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30 March 1999

Introduction: The social and economic problem of vulnerable areas

Vulnerable areas, as they are termed, do not exist a priori. They become vulnerable in the course of the increasingly rapid evolution in the economic and social environment. In fact, although inequality between territories in terms of wealth and prominence has always existed, the concept of vulnerable areas is recent. It is part of a spatial-economic world which is characterised, in the long term, by the concentration of jobs and people in ever smaller areas, obviously to the detriment of other areas. An examination of simple population maps from the turn of the century to the present day clearly shows, at least with regard to France, how the Paris region has, so to speak, 'sucked in' people from the provinces and how, even in the provinces, people tend to settle in certain increasingly popular locations, thus creating miniature economic deserts around these. Senator Gérard DELFAU, Chairman of the *Comité de Bassin d'Emploi* (employment catchment area committee) of Saint André de Sangonis in the Languedoc, and national Chairman of the *Comité de Liaison des Comités de Bassin d'Emploi* (CLCBE - liaison committee for the employment catchment area committees) supports, in his recent book (cf. bibliography), the theory that the decline (desertification) of the countryside and the problems of the suburbs are actually two sides of the same coin, which creates a host of 'vulnerable areas' that are very different in nature.

What is more, it is essential that this idea of the existence of differences between vulnerable areas be taken into account since territories, like social groups, have their own peculiarities which must be grasped in order to understand their development potentials or to take action. What, indeed, do the following have in common?

- A zone created from a production site belonging to a large international group which is setting up in one region and leaving another, for strategic reasons which are totally beyond the control of local policy makers.

- A zone characterised by the scale of public or semi-public employment (in some zones these sectors are the main job providers).
- A zone marked by a network of small enterprises (here too, it may be necessary to differentiate between structures: for example, a long-established cottage industry which harnesses family capital and an innovative SME linked to a dynamic business sector have little in common).

Moreover, the demise of the traditional operating structures of organisations and traditional employment and the volatility of industrial and service sites which are at the mercy of international recession mean that the economic cohesion of a region, and even its economic control, becomes increasingly problematic and uncertain. It is against this economic background that training policies and employment studies and initiatives must be developed.

In addition to or rather as part of these differences, the reason which has led to the use of the expression 'vulnerable area' (in the main by the authorities and the European Structural Funds) is the risk of the appearance, or the actual presence, of a major problem. This very vague concept of a major problem can be split into two elements: firstly, a negative economic dynamic which means that the area no longer creates wealth or even loses this because capital is no longer accumulating there normally; secondly, the unravelling of the traditional social fabrics in terms of the migration and ageing of the population, the formation of ghettos and the absence of social cohesion regulated by traditional or legal mechanisms. We will see that these two points (economic development and social cohesion) are the main focus of the work done by regional councils in France). It should be noted that the concept of the internal dynamic of a local area is, in our opinion, absolutely vital to understanding or predicting when, how and why an area may become a 'vulnerable area' or, on the other hand, ceases to be so.

Finally, in order to try and understand both the specific characteristics of areas and the differences between these areas, be they vulnerable or not, certain criteria have been proposed by economists and development operators working at ground level:

- relationships between the local, supra-local and national levels in terms of communication routes and greater or lesser ease of economic exchanges;
- the type of environment: central urban, peripheral urban, semi-urban (or semi-rural!) clustered around a central point or an axis, or extremely scattered (isolated valleys);
- the nature of the social and economic problems encountered: industrial redevelopment, isolation and risk of desertification, specific social problems (ghettos, suburbs, etc.);
- the structure of the Employment-Training relationship in the area: 'provincial' type around a development pole, 'Italian' type through a network of enterprises, etc.;
- was there a development dynamic before and what kind was this: exogenous, operating principally through external contributions, or endogenous (based on purely local initiatives, which are clearly much more effective in the medium and long term)?

Historically, this type of approach and questioning is quite alien to the world of training, at least in France. However, due to the pressure of events, this state of affairs is changing and may bring new problems to the education sector. We will very briefly show the form that this new approach has taken in France and what the main areas of discussion and work could be in this context in the future.

1. *The emergence of area-based training policies in France*

1.1 Local training problems in a national training context

The gradual appearance of a local dimension to vocational training in France is quite a recent phenomenon. Vocational training was established in the 1960s, based on a national policy which did not really take the local dimension into account, and certainly did not do so systematically or comprehensively. It was also established on the basis of enterprise policies which, with certain exceptions, did not, a priori, tally with this rationale. However, gradually, and in certain specific contexts, it began to become apparent that training in general and vocational training in particular could provide solutions and form an integral part of a local policy. Certain examples testify to this emergence, highlighting some of the main functions of training within an area.

By the late 1960s, some regions had what were termed *actions collectives de formation* (ACT - local training initiatives). These schemes were originally established in an attempt to prepare for the redevelopment of iron and steel, mining and potassium areas, among others. The idea was that general, technical and vocational training should create a substratum allowing wage-earners or non-wage-earners to develop and that this gradual raising of the level of qualifications and of the level of understanding of technical and economic mechanisms was one of the conditions that would facilitate the arrival of new enterprises and new activities. The training established was to be both vocational and personal, and general and technical, and was targeted, without exception, at the whole population in one employment catchment area. Whilst one of these schemes still exists in the north of France, they effectively disappeared with the economic areas which gave rise to them, although they were, in some cases, prolonged by the redevelopment centres of the mid-1980s.

The second dimension concerns local development in the traditional sense. The main function of training in this case is to flank development strategies and projects for creating activities. Training helps to activate the internal dynamic of the area and facilitates the implementation and management of projects. However, it cannot, on its own, create the essential synergy between players or the dynamic of the projects; these continue to be generated by the area itself. All this is now fairly common knowledge. Pilot experiments have been publicised in the media and theories about training-action and training-development have been established and formalised. Training which is linked to local development (in the strict sense of the term), despite being extremely rewarding and worthwhile in terms of approach and method and, of itself, representing a specific function of training, is nonetheless relatively marginal as regards mainstream vocational or non-vocational training practices.

A third way of envisaging the emergence of links between training and local areas is through what could be termed the 'major site' logic. There is no exact, legal or economic definition of this concept; let us simply say that it could involve an intervention in an area, at a particular point in time, aimed at establishing infrastructures that meet the needs of activity creation which generates a requirement for a qualified workforce. This intervention may be of public, private or mixed-sector origin and there are already many examples of this: Electricité de France (EDF) nuclear power stations, high speed rail links, the Olympic Games and Eurotunnel, which can be regarded as artificial and, in part, temporary employment catchment areas.

However, vocational training has, in all cases, a specific and essential place since it constitutes one of the prerequisites for the operational success of the various phases of the site: it is a condition for starting the site, via the provision of technical and design skills that are frequently specific and sometimes unique; it is a condition for the successful development of operations, via the constant

adaptation of the workforce to the techniques developed during implementation and to the many unforeseen problems which may arise. The training generated by the qualification requirements of the site itself may be linked directly (technical sub-contracting) or indirect (creation of activity, trade and tourism areas) to the site; finally, it is a condition for the smooth closure of the site where a section of the population which worked there, sometimes for several years, and which does not want to (or cannot) relocate geographically must be redeployed. Although limited in number, 'major sites' can be regarded and analysed as laboratories that test the role which training can play and the methods which it can provide in terms of area-based development in a limited area.

1.2 *The appearance of truly regional policies with the introduction of decentralisation in 1983*

In France, the area-based approach to training issues really took off, of course, with the introduction of regional policies per se, in the legal sense of the term, under the decentralisation acts of 1982 to 1986 and thereafter, and their consolidation by the five-year act of 20 December 1993, which demonstrated the strategic will of the regional councils and emphasised the latter's joint measures with the regional prefectures within the context of five-year contracts.

Regional vocational training plans were still more or less directly linked to economic development plans that were also the responsibility of the regional councils and which, in a way, generated and gave them meaning. In this respect, the regional councils used vocational training in the same way as the other economic operators (enterprises or branches of activity), i.e. as a way of serving other objectives - in this case the economic development of each region. Training was a response, an intermediate step in a more general policy, and not an end in itself. This should have meant that vocational training was not a rationale 'parachuted in' or more or less imposed from above by the State, but something which, although not originating from the grass roots, could at least be firmly rooted in the specific requirements and characteristics of the local areas within each region.

The corollary risk was clearly the disparity between the regional training policies, problems as regards regulation or harmonisation and, consequently, the risk of accentuating, via training, the inequalities that already existed in economic terms between rich regions and poor regions. There was also the risk that, within each region, the targeting of training objectives linked to development objectives and the political will to influence the running of a local area in some way would simply accentuate the spatial, economic and sociological disparities, leading to the creation of a kind of 'two-tier regional society'. Finally, the last fact to note is that from the moment when the regional councils targeted training at the economy, the State turned its attention towards assuming responsibility for those excluded from the economy, for the campaign against unemployment using so-called employment policies and for the various measures and strategies aimed at (re)integration.

2. *Training policies and regional and local development*

A training policy is characterised by certain fairly general guidelines and objectives and by a certain way of understanding the situation and the area in which this policy is to be applied. In the context of the regions and vulnerable areas, the following considerations must be taken into account.

2.1 *The decisive factors in regional and local policies; the circumstances leading to training*

On examining the content of French regional policies, particularly those of the outlying regions, and also the purely local policies developed by inter-district or partnership structures such as the Comités de Bassin d'Emploi (employment catchment area committees), two major concerns can be identified which the training objectives and specific training measures must take into account: firstly, economic development and, secondly, the social dynamic, with both being based on a cohesive geographical layout in terms of regional planning.

With regard to **economic development**, the main characteristic of training policies that try to promote or create this is their fragmented, polymorphous and heterogeneous nature in terms of the people taken into account and the methods of intervention. Training measures in this respect are also always linked to financial, organisational, management, tax exemption or consultancy measures with which they must be as cohesive as possible. In particular:

- the maintenance of existing activities, trades, cottage industries and agricultural holdings, which are generally all SMEs and are often very small enterprises: these measures involve operational changes and bringing enterprises into line with European standards. They also involve targeted training of the owners of enterprises in terms of management, organisation, quality and IT, to name the most common aspects;
- the creation of new activities: this involves all the measures designed to assist the creation of what are essentially one-person enterprises through financial incentives, the provision of premises or infrastructures and the training of future company managers in management, organisation and marketing. However, this also involves all the dynamics for flanking projects, from their preparation to their actual implementation and their 'normal' operation; training in this case is a process of facilitating and monitoring every aspect of the project. Historically, the local development and training-development dynamics that have already been mentioned have been based on this approach;
- the redevelopment of traditional sectors: these measures, where necessary, generally affect what are often quite large sections of the population and require the establishment of training/redevelopment/job-seeking infrastructures in the local area;
- the 'hunt' for large national or international enterprises which, by setting up in the space of a few months or years, can help to alter completely the area-based dynamic (whereas, historically, up to the end of the 1970s, this phenomenon occurred over several generations). The French examples of Mercedes/Swatch in Sarreguemines and Sony in Valenciennes are the most significant and the most recent. Being able to find a skilled workforce close to the industrial site is one of the explicit preconditions imposed by these enterprises and means that the local area must take action in this regard;
- research and technological innovation: in addition to the universities, these measures often involve technology centres situated at close proximity to large provincial towns or even in towns of an average size. The idea is, through a synergy created between basic research and the commercial dynamic, to shorten innovation circuits and processes and to generate new activities, products and jobs. Training in this case must cover the whole range of qualifications, from top researchers to the employees of the SMEs who normally operate at the end of the line. The drawback of this approach is that it is still to be proven that the job creation dynamic actually generates jobs, in all cases, in the area of the technology centre (the jobs may actually be generated in another region or even another country);

- finally, in general, the constant tailoring of training to employment and to the qualifications of the workforce, at least in three complementary aspects:
  - initial technological and vocational training by economic sector allowing an area to be given a positive 'substratum' in terms of qualifications,
  - complementary vocational training for adapting to an occupation, job or type of employment, particularly through the level of qualification,
  - finally, the increasingly pressing and difficult problem of functions and qualifications which span several occupations or business sectors.

Intervening in these aspects dimensions in a precise, effective and constant manner involves knowing, as precisely as possible, about the jobs and qualifications in an area. This is why the *Observatoires de l'Emploi et de la Formation* (employment and training observatories) have proliferated over many years at both regional and local level (observatories created at the initiative of *communes* (local districts) or employment catchment areas) and at sectoral level at the initiative of business sectors.

With regard to **social development**, this is often presented as an integral part of the economic issues: people do not just work in an area, they also live there on a day-to-day basis and try to do so as well as possible. A minimum level of conditions and measures must therefore be attained and implemented:

- In the areas threatened by out migration, an effort must firstly be made to retain the population and to promote population growth. Economic development is not possible with a non-existent or ageing population. Ensuring that young people do not leave is a major objective. To achieve this, they must be able to find a job and perhaps, even before a job, secondary or university education: a young person who leaves his native employment catchment area or region to study elsewhere generally does not return, or will only do so much later in life. Training in itself is, at this point and by its very existence or non-existence, a factor which can create a positive or negative dynamic. This raises the whole question of the schools available in low population areas and obviously of the creation of new forms of training, including self-tuition, distance learning and the general use of New Educational Technologies.
- Unemployment must be combated and the integration of young people must be encouraged. This requires links which are as direct and coherent as possible between the educational environment and employers individually or collectively, which transit via the business sectors and their representatives. The often-stated desire to develop schemes that combine work and training, particularly in the form of employment contracts which include training, does not overcome the actual difficulty of establishing these schemes, particularly when the business environment knows relatively little about this issue.
- Unfortunately, it is increasingly true that inequalities must also be combated and the straightforward exclusion of the most vulnerable populations must be prevented. The level of qualifications required in order to be taken on by employers is constantly increasing and yet, on the other hand, we are seeing a rise in illiteracy and, more generally, a deterioration in the basic training or education of a large number of young people. This often goes hand-in-hand with family, psychological, housing and health problems. This population is not truly mobile and remains in 'its' local area, with the long-term risk, in certain places, of islands of poverty and qualification deficits being formed. One of the tangible consequences of this is the need for training-integration professionals to **work alongside the social services** and also to innovate using new and multidisciplinary forms of reintegration into society.

- Mobility and career opportunities must be ensured in the region or zone. This is what guarantees, in the long term, the retention of the population on the basis not of poverty and/or a lack of choice, but on the basis of a voluntary and positive project in which those who fund education can invest in the medium and long term. This requires the development of job and career management procedures on a limited area-based basis (employment catchment area or region).
- Finally, it is useful to develop the living environment as this is a value to which individuals and also institutions are attaching increasing importance. This enables a community to be retained in a local area and, moreover, enables it to attract new people. This is particularly true of social categories with a high level of qualification (executives, engineers) and their families who constitute a high 'added value' in a local area. The vigour of cultural life and the quality and diversity of initial and continuing, vocational or more cultural training are increasingly viewed, regardless of their economic effectiveness, as positive attraction factors.

It must be ensured that all these objectives can be applied in a cohesive manner in a region or area in order to try and achieve a relative balance between territories and in order to specifically prevent the appearance of 'vulnerable areas'. In France, one of the main problems is the dominance of the Paris region over the other administrative regions in the provinces, the extreme inequality between the regions themselves, and, within each region, the tendency for development to be concentrated around towns, thus forming oases in the middle of 'local deserts'. Concern for regional planning is allowing this negative phenomenon to be cushioned to a certain extent. One of the possible responses in this respect is specifically to take action with regard to the schools available and to establish centres of learning and university branches and technology and research centres. We are seeing the emergence in some regions of the concept of 'skills centres' based around a group of occupations or a specific field (plastics technology, harnessing of marine products, agri-foods, etc.) which aim to be centres of excellence within their field and which bring together, in one area, a high-tech enterprise, a research and futurology centre, initial, continuing and university training and sub-contracting and distribution enterprises. The balanced distribution of these centres in a region or, more generally, a given local area is a possible response to the appearance of vulnerable areas.

2.2 *How can the 'local' level or a 'vulnerable area' be addressed?*

In France the region definitely seems to be the arena for decision-making and for structuring the strategies and policies of the various players, particularly with regard to the forward planning of jobs. The *Observatoires Régionaux de l'Emploi et de la Formation* (OREFs - regional employment and training observatories) were created for this purpose under the auspices of the State and of regional councils. Their aim was to create and establish in each region a statistical apparatus suited to employment and training and targeted at precise sectors and occupations in order to try and remedy the over-general and rather ineffective nature of traditional economic indicators, which in the past were often conceived at national level against the backdrop of state intervention.

However, the emergence of the region as a centre for decision-making, planning, financing and creating tools in respect of employment and vocational training cannot instantly solve every problem and even raises some fresh questions about a simple understanding of and approach to the local economic fabric.

The first of these questions concerns the link between the regional level and the local level which is still to be analysed and to which, to date, no one has really given an answer. The State chose to decentralise its powers and to devolve the policy-making of its ministers to regional level because the region seemed to be a median: small enough to be more in touch with the specific social circumstances of the lives of the people and enterprises, yet large enough to allow for planning vision in terms of cohesive economic development. As the key policies developed nationally had

proven to be inapplicable and local micro-development did not allow a global development dynamic to be generated, a median level - the region - and one which was new in the French administrative framework, seemed to be able to mitigate the drawbacks of both the national and local level.

However, even this approach soon proved to have its limitations, due in particular to the problem of regional divides, which do not necessarily tally with the main economic vectors of today and which also means that the regions are very dissimilar and unequal. There was also the problem of inequality in housing and economic development within each region: areas within the regions are not completely uniform and there was a significant risk of making the same errors, through centralist and authoritarian regional planning, as had been made previously at national level, i.e. sticking to goals which did not correspond to the real situation in the area and standardising or applying uniformly development models to micro-territories which were not ready for this or did not want this.

First the State, and then the regional councils, therefore tried to grasp the real situation in the area more precisely and, particularly between 1982-83, new statistical or operational frameworks for local areas flourished. Through a very precise approach to the local area, these frameworks enabled the implementation of local policies which were cohesive or did not clash with regional and/or national policies. However, a new contradiction appeared, namely each public institution tended to develop its own framework and its own grid for the local area on the basis of its own policies. These more or less artificial and at times inconsistent frameworks are now being superposed on each other: the areas defined by the *Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi* (ANPE - national employment agency), **employment zones** (statistical framework used by the *Ministère du Travail* (Ministry of Employment): France is divided into 484 employment zones, each one defined by 83 economic indicators), the **training zones** of the former *Crédit Formation Individualisé* (CFI - individual training credit) for the integration of young people, and the **training areas** for initial training. None of these take into account the **employment catchment area** concept, as proposed by the economists, which is an area of an a priori undetermined nature and size in which there is in fact an economic and social dynamic, a synergy between the employees' places of residence, the workplace and the recruitment area of the enterprises, and sometimes also a synergy between the enterprises themselves in what can be termed local industrial systems.

The more recent sociological concept of **residential catchment area** includes the employment catchment area by incorporating cultural, social and leisure dimensions. The approach that uses employment catchment areas currently seems to be the best way of understanding the area prior to defining an economic development and training policy, and the most regional councils are working in this direction. However, the work is technically difficult, particularly since the employment catchment area as a concept is neither particularly precise nor immutable, and different types of area can in fact be identified which operate in very dissimilar ways according to whether an enclosed valley (Pyrenees or Vosges for example), a semi-rural environment or an urban area is involved. In our opinion, this calls for study and research into this aspect, which is still largely unexplored, in terms of the link between the economy, employment and training.

Training can therefore be closely linked to the local level which is more in touch with the real economic and social situation in the area. This local grounding constitutes the platform for what could be termed a regional training system, particularly in terms of the reception, information, positioning, monitoring, guidance and integration of the various types of community that the training system must take into account. An obvious comment is that future/potential audiences must be analysed as they are and where they are if we are to stand any chance of increasing their awareness and providing them with training responses suited to their circumstances and their environment.

The other side of the coin, however, is that the grounding of the training system at the local level adds to the difficulties and complexities of the training system, the administrative system, the economic system and the operation of society, as a whole with all its conflicts, inconsistencies, differences and riches. This approach is faced with all the divisions, splits, rivalries, antagonisms, indifference and sectional and institutional conflicts which constitute, particularly in France, the web of daily life. The local level has to face all the complications of the hybrid measures and financing of the vocational training mechanism (sometimes a single measure can be financed in up to 40 ways!). This is the price to be paid so that the regional system is effectively rooted as close as possible to economic life and to the lives of the general public.

2.3 *Possible forms of training in a regional and local development approach*

2.3.1 *Possible functions of training*

In our opinion, the main characteristics of training in a limited area and particularly in a 'vulnerable' area are its multi-functionality and its capacity to adapt to the multiple aims indicated above. In short, and at the risk of caricaturising this, we feel that the training mechanism(s) in a vulnerable area must be able to target the following objectives or functions:

- Develop the level of initial training of population strata that are as broad as possible, in terms of basic training, in what are currently termed 'social skills', and also personal and cultural training, in order to create, in a region or area, an educational substratum that acts as a platform and a means of economic and cognitive development;
- Raise the level of general technical and vocational training in order to be able to 'graft' onto this, as necessary, more specialised qualifications which will perhaps be needed in order to subsequently implement specific and precise projects, and also to ensure a good level of mastery by the inhabitants of what are termed 'transversal skills' which are increasingly useful and omnipresent in occupations, including formerly technical-based occupations;
- Adapt the vocational skills of the various types of community in the key occupations or qualifications of the area, if possible as a precaution or as a supplement to a project, whilst bearing in mind the fact that, with this type of 'specialised' training, problems often occur when large numbers of people want training and that it is appropriate in this case to be innovative when it comes to institutional and educational arrangements;
- Promote initiatives and supplements to projects. This involves establishing training-action and training-development methodologies in which the objective is not so much to acquire vocational skills as to master procedures, project management and the monitoring of measures; in many, and if possible innovative, ways, the training flanks the creation of activities and the development of the key participants.
- To create synergies between the various categories of participants: project vectors, financiers, elected representatives, business sectors, union and community representatives, etc. This dimension of making an area more dynamic - through training, by assisting people and institutions which are not used to working together and which are often not rooted in the same culture - is a factor which, in our opinion, is undervalued but absolutely essential in terms of development.

2.3.2 *Possible training tools and procedures in this context*

Here too, adjustment to the constraints of the local area and to the characteristics of the projects, players and jobs or occupations, particularly as regards time, calls for a diversified view to be taken of the technical and educational responses. It also calls for the use of a whole range of training strategies, from the traditional training course to self-tuition through to distance learning using the Internet, and including all existing or future forms of training, with the essential criterion being the relevance to the problem raised of the procedure chosen. In particular, certain points seem to be of major importance:

- the link between initial and continuing training in the medium and long term and the link between the players involved in the training and the social and economic players in the shorter term, developing, in both cases, ways of combining situations and of alternation, taking into account, of course, institutional constraints, limitations and brakes, which are frequently numerous.
- the design of training as a flanking process upstream, downstream and in the monitoring of projects, as much and sometimes more than as a purely selective response to an identified skill requirement, with one clearly not being exclusive of the other. The methodologies of training/development, training/measure, project teaching skills and project management are the main areas to be promoted.
- innovation in the use of New Educational Technologies and in the personalisation of training: establishment of permanent self-tuition centres and personal distance learning using multi-media resources or the Internet within a geographical and partnership framework. These new educational responses in particular enable small population movements to be taken into account and personal responses to be provided, particularly in remote areas or in areas which do not have an adequate supply of training. Nevertheless, they clearly do not provide a response to all training requirements and their preparation and implementation are sometimes lengthy and relatively expensive.

2.3.3 *The public to be taken into account*

Finally, here too we feel that training in a local area or vulnerable area, with a goal and an outlook of development and activity creation, must 'aim high' and try to take into account, using different means and educational methods, all the categories of the public or the population who contribute directly or indirectly to what could be termed the 'collective social and vocational qualification' of the area.

In our opinion, this involves understanding:

- the different socio-professional categories of employees or job-seekers, young people and adults, in an approach which is both demographic (anticipation of movements), in terms of existing qualifications by level and type of occupation, and prospective using possible assumptions about the development capacities of these categories. When combined with a kind of mapping of existing and potential jobs and occupations, such knowledge enables a type of forward planning for local jobs and the construction of personal training itineraries to be established;
- all the local players and operators (project vectors, economic decision-makers, employees of bridging structures, agents of the devolved and decentralised administration, etc.) for whom training often exists but seems fairly sporadic, short in duration and lacking a perspective common to these various communities;

- company managers and the union representatives of employers and employees: nothing durable is possible unless the employers and their representatives are involved and are, at the very least, aware of a development perspective beyond the limited and short-term interests of a single enterprise. The same reasoning is valid for the employees' unions. It is well-known and indisputable that the involvement of the representatives of the working world in a dynamic of activity creation and/or redevelopment is one of the key factors in success;
- local elected representatives, who are also essential facilitators or triggers for whom training is currently quite random in France and who cause particular difficulties in terms of the availability and motivation of interested parties; in our opinion, awareness raising and flanking must be analysed just as much as pure training with regard to this particular type of decision-maker;
- development agents and, in general, the local development professionals on whom the supply of training currently seems to be concentrated, particularly leading to qualifications and diplomas; we could add to this the training of the training agents themselves who are often not inured to the characteristics of training-development and area-based contexts;
- finally, the population as a whole, and therefore the residents and general public themselves, in respect of whom awareness raising, information and training are perceived as elements facilitating the emergence of economic development; here too these measures are very irregular and require an approach and an infrastructure which are very proactive. However, this aspect is, in our opinion, absolutely vital since, regardless of the specific projects and developments, it is the more or less positive context of the population as a whole which guarantees sustainable development, the resolution of difficulties or the consolidation of the area, and its future attractiveness.

3. *Some rules on positioning in view of the challenges, difficulties and limitations of this approach*

3.1 *There are no ready-made models for local development or vulnerable areas and no models for systematic and mechanical relationships between local development and training*

Each local area seems to be specific, in terms of its economic, social and cultural components. The types of positioning and relationship between players also vary according to strategic, professional or ideological considerations which vary from one region to another and from one employment catchment area to another. Solely at training level, the practice of the invitation to tender and specifications may or may not be used by operators with basically identical aims. Here too, it seems that the training organisations, networks and players stake, for the future, part of their credibility on their capacity to adapt specifically to each area and to each project.

Moreover, local development must not be perceived as a closed system but as a dynamic involving new ways of thinking, in particular the emergence of the need for 'horizontal' thinking in terms of training engineering, forcing the situation to be viewed in terms of composite territories and across sectors, institutions and disciplines in order to resolve complex problems with a 'wide' social basis.

The fact that the real situation in the area is being closely tracked must not mask the fact that, in terms of development, responses may be found outside the reference area, particularly in border regions or in cases where a multinational partnership is possible, in a foreign country. Local development also involves externality strategies at regional, national and European level. This is

even truer in terms of training, particularly with regard to the role of the regional councils and the European Social Fund. This begs the whole question of the link between a purely 'endogenous' development which would function using only the forces and components of the local area, at the risk of becoming enclosed, and 'exogenous' development which would have fairly wide recourse to the outside world at the risk of becoming dependent on this. The link between these types of development and the extent to which each is used at the different stages of a project are a major strategic issue.

Finally, it is undoubtedly urgent and necessary to consider the differences and similarities between 'traditional' employment catchment areas, which are often predominantly semi-rural, and the concept of employment catchment areas or countries which are predominantly urban or suburban: what are the differences in the population, the social problems, the institutions present, the responses to be formulated, etc.? Vulnerable areas are by their very nature very (too) heterogeneous, which takes one back to the question asked in the introduction. A multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional working and discussion group could prepare the ground on this issue in just one or two meetings.

3.2 *The 'zoning' of territories seems to be a systematic component of development strategies*

Projects can be viable only if they are rooted in specific circumstances which are identified, mastered and controlled. This is why the national (and international) territory is increasingly controlled by a multitude of authorities and superstructures: European project partnerships, *chartes intercommunales* (inter-district charters), SIVOM (*syndicat intercommunal à vocation multiple* - intercommunal associations with multiple aims), *communautés de communes* (associations of local districts), etc. In particular, intercommunality seems to be one of the main components and one of the conditions of local development.

The continuing training of employees, in its market logic, does not really correspond to this dynamic and this framework. Moreover, it is well known that the supply of training for adults is over-represented in the highly urbanised development areas and is often sporadic or even non-existent in problem areas. Mechanisms such as the CFI (*Crédit Formation Individualisé* – individual training credit) or the *PAQUE* programme (*Préparation Active à la Qualification et à l'Emploi* – active preparation for qualification and employment) tried, in their time and in their own way, to check this process. However, their scope in this respect was limited and the question now is whether the training system as a whole is capable of providing rapid responses suited to micro-local projects, with organisations which would complement and not compete with each other and without a system of regulation imposed and guided by a financier or a contracting authority.

Identifying a type of 'framework' or, more specifically and elegantly, a 'network' for the territory which involves project rationale and lifestyles rather than purely administrative and institutional compartmentalisation remains a thorny issue which is largely unresolved. Moreover, all the forms of zoning involve tools and means that must promote action, and not ready-made compartments into which measures should be placed and divided. In France, the *Loi sur l'Aménagement du Territoire* (regional planning act) of 5 February 1995 confirmed, in this respect, the concept of the Country, the attraction and relevance of which are obvious on paper (cf. the book by Michel Kotas in the bibliography), but whose realisation remains to be proven in fact.

3.3 *The usefulness of partnership structures for development and the establishment of local synergy*

The existence of inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary structures for co-ordinating policies, and particularly for dynamising territories using their own resources and players, seems to constitute a necessary platform for any lasting development project in a vulnerable area. These structures could:

- Be the preferred contacts and operators for establishing employment and training policies decided at another geographical and/or institutional level: regional, national and European. They could also form the bodies to adapt these policies to the specific characteristics of the territory;
- Play a role of co-ordination, dynamisation, stimulation and enhancement of the value of the local forces and local projects in the context of what is termed endogenous development of the territories;
- Intervene not just in the field of employment and training, but more generally in all social questions that concern a local area and which are very frequently dealt with in a compartmentalised manner. These structures could therefore become an important and perhaps unique place for social reconstruction.;
- Develop assignments involving innovation and economic and social experimentation, and research-action combining economic, social, cultural and environmental development. Partnerships with study and research organisations could be duly envisaged;
- Ensure co-operation between players and institutions of different types and with different remits, so that the players are mutually enriched and do not cancel each other out, as is unfortunately too often the case, in terms of:
  - breaking down the divisions between public and private structures,
  - breaking down the divisions between the policies of different ministries (town, housing, social measures, health, employment, training, culture, etc.),
  - systematically striving for four-way co-operation (between public authorities, socio-professional environment, local elected representatives, community environment) wherever that this is possible.

This goal of breaking down divisions could also lead to the creation or revitalisation of 'intermediary bodies' as bridging institutions between the citizen and the main economic and social decision-making arenas.

- In particular, these structures could encourage or guide the 'area-based educational systems' which, at the level of an area (a country), are capable of co-ordinating the set of educational measures, policies and strategies that are very often established in a disparate manner: initial training, vocational training, apprenticeship, ongoing education, training-development, etc. at the initiative of various players: Department of Education, the State, regional councils, districts and departments, inter-district structures, groups of 'driving' individuals, etc.;
- These partnership structures should be able to perform a function of 'area-based economic and social monitoring'; the concept of local economic and social committees is a step in the right direction but further advances could be made through the idea of 'listening to local areas and communities', of being completely clear about the current social situation, of anticipating changes insofar as is possible and of adapting as a precaution all the state and local policies on health, social welfare, housing, education, employment, culture, etc.;

- Finally, in general, these structures could eventually become the cornerstone for ensuring that the 'horizontal rationales' of the territory where the local operators are interacting dovetail with 'vertical rationales' for the local application of policies at another level (departmental, regional, interregional, national, European). This dovetailing is one of the major specific difficulties that measures face at local level. It is because of this lack of synergy that a lot of energy is wasted and certain projects fail, and no institutional provision exists to date in this respect.

3.4 *The importance of establishing, where possible, local systems for managing human resources*

This approach is only possible and really effective when the economic and social fabric of an area is not too degraded and diffuse or when development is already under way and no longer at the incubation stage. In France, it has already been initiated on several occasions around average-sized towns in the provinces. Very briefly, it is based on three types of structure or measure:

- a strategic development group composed of company managers and development players (a kind of steering committee);
- an area-based unit for human resources engineering composed of local professionals, if possible from many disciplines, with responsibility for:
  - training the members of the unit in how to solve the problems faced by enterprises;
  - economic monitoring of the sectors and branches and of the social components of the local area;
  - identifying the sectors with economic and employment difficulties;
  - formulating suitable responses and co-ordinating these responses with public and private financiers;
  - harnessing the operators affected by the implementation (information, assessment, guidance, training, etc.);
  - establishing a multi-partnership 'vector' group responsible for managing the measures;
  - publicity in the media for the initial projects in order to increase awareness and involve other SME-SMIs in the measures;
  - capitalising on the practices of the engineering unit by an assessor and evaluation of the impact of the projects;
  - information exchanges with partners, particularly European;
- mapping of existing and future occupations and skills in the area, requiring:
  - the collection of information from enterprises;
  - the exhaustive analysis of jobs and their holders; identification of job types;
  - development of nomenclatures for professional groups;
  - classification of job types identified by professional group and by skill level;
  - analysis of job-seeking groups and identification of the gaps between these and the structure of these job types;
  - a current breakdown of the numbers per group and per level and prospects for change in the medium term (3 to 5 years);
  - the establishing of scenarios based on the premise of marked structural and economic changes.

3.5 *The vital link between initial vocational training and continuing vocational training in the short, medium and long term*

Initial vocational training and continuing vocational training are educational systems which are historically unconnected in France (disregarding what is termed ongoing education) but which should logically act together in an area. In particular, it seems a shame that continuing training often acts as a cure (when it is not a 'rescue' measure) for a labour or redevelopment need, without a more long-term structure being provided through the qualifications achieved at the initial training stage. On this point the specific difficulty is in achieving a reliable forward-looking approach in terms of qualifications, but it is still the case that initial vocational training must be able to constitute a platform on which continuing training can be supported. In France, this problem is particularly difficult to tackle as it involves the question of a new and different institutional positioning in the relationships between regional councils and regional education authorities. We are starting to see this positioning emerge in some regions but, in the majority of cases, it remains difficult to achieve.

3.6 *Training organisations must work and position themselves differently*

As in enterprises, the rationale of demand should aim to prevail over that of supply. It is the relevance of the specific response to a problem or invitation to tender which establishes the credibility of organisations. This means that these organisations should be constantly listening to the grass roots, to those people making the demands and to the decision-makers and that they should be sufficiently flexible and precise in operational terms in order to respond rapidly and appropriately. It is even desirable for strategic monitoring activities to be implemented, particularly in the context of European projects, and for these to be positioned as far upstream as possible of the projects. This presupposes the refusal of an 'a priori' supply of training.

This also raises a question about **the cohesion of the intervention of training professionals and of other players who traditionally participate in a local area**. This coherence is far from being assured due to institutional compartmentalisation, professional advancement, training and culture. These are often two separate worlds which have difficulty in coming together. The training professionals, even when they work in an organisation (to say nothing of those in an enterprise) are not really aware of the regional and local dimension. It is even true to say that there are still people, and not just novices, who cannot differentiate between the regional council and the prefecture of the region. In all cases, the nature and operation of the players and area-based institutions is fairly poorly understood because there is no or very little area-based culture in the vocational training environment. Conversely, it seems that there is little training culture among local players, except for those who might be directly involved in redevelopment or training-development operations.

Synergies can undoubtedly be found and established in order to create new forms of partnership and new working methods involving local elected representatives, politicians, administrators, unions, the economic environment, the socio-educational environment, the vocational training environment, etc. This type of multipartite partnership, as discussed, is unfortunately not really part of French culture in which parochial attitudes and unproductive local and institutional rivalries still abound.

3.7 The creation and establishment of what could be termed area-based training engineering could constitute one of the possible responses (but not the only one) in the development of vulnerable areas

This approach of coordinating diverse measures in space and time allows local development projects, among other things, to be flanked and monitored. However, its implementation is slow and it faces certain difficulties such as:

- The fact that training professionals may be present and active in all the development phases of a project, particularly upstream and downstream, but also at the periphery, and that development agents can provide a training dimension;
- The fact that a true involvement of all the disciplines may be imposed on all the participants. As it is, the development agents are the main guarantors of this dimension. This is not really adequate and raises the question of the nature of training developed for different players;
- The problem of the compartmentalisation of the administrative structures, whether or not at the level of the devolved ministries (many development and training measures require the involvement of various ministries), in relations between structures of the devolved State and the decentralised State, and finally at the level of relations between the various echelons of the local authorities;
- The potential problem of the form of negotiation and partnership between developers, contractors, financiers, training organisations and local promotion teams. These various players are not always accustomed to or experienced in working together and sometimes clearly also do not have a common professional culture or common initial or continuing training itineraries. The same question can arise with regard to the project managers and operators in terms of the balance between decision-making, promotional, educational and administrative structures, synergies between which are not always easy to optimise.

3.8 The respective training of the training players and local development players

... and the links and complementary characteristics between these must be analysed in order to avoid the reproduction of ineffective professional compartmentalisation at grass root level. Currently, an examination in France of the plethora of courses providing preparations for the various training occupations would reveal that only two or three explicitly include a regional and local dimension, and then only in an almost marginal manner. In the same way, in none of the diplomas that prepare for local development occupations, can a training dimension be clearly found. One or more of the qualifying courses, whether or not leading to diplomas, that are based on the concept of dual skills (skill in training and skill in the field of area-based development - all this still needs to be defined of course) could, in our opinion, form part of a useful innovation and experiment in the future, capable of responding to a real social demand and of contributing to the renewal of the supply of university and vocational training.

3.9 The importance of the cultural aspects of a local area

... is, in our opinion, an absolutely essential factor in understanding the economic and social circumstances which are to be tackled. In particular, it is often these factors which allow a positive dynamic for change to emerge or not, as the case may be. In this respect, we believe that it would wrong, if not dangerous, to go too far in reorienting continuing training in the economic and professional aspects of employment. This would also risk the gradual marginalisation and even the

disappearance of the web of structures formerly referred to in France as **Ongoing Education**, with this being situated at a very local level. We personally believe that, when working in a local area, whether this is an employment catchment area, district, town or rural valley, etc., one cannot act as if this movement did not exist or had not existed, since it constitutes a 'network'.

Coincidentally with the institutional downscaling of this movement, the social requirement to take into account all people and groups is again emerging, firstly in the context of policies aimed at social integration through training, in which the vocational training aspect is only one part of the policy, and secondly for economic reasons, involving the development of the 'generalist' skills increasingly demanded by enterprises. We feel that this could perhaps provide a way forward for the designing of a new training system that would link the general and the vocational, the cognitive and the behavioural, in the context of new educational models. We believe that in all circumstances, at local area level, it is important not to set the economic against the social, the vocational against the general, the utilitarian against the cultural, etc., but to view these as complementary aspects by relying on the existing institutions.

Conclusion

We believe that despite all these questions and problems, there is nonetheless a prospect for real change at administrative, economic, political and cultural levels, if only due to the fact that the extent of the problems and blockages in society which we are facing today (regardless of the names given to these: two-tier society, social break-up, etc.) means that, in our opinion, they can only be resolved (unless there is a collective will to do otherwise) in the long term and by getting as close as possible to the economic and day-to-day concerns of communities, i.e. in small local areas, whatever they may be (catchment area, country, vulnerable area depending on the nature of the problems occurring there).

We must therefore stop regarding training and territories as separate and even conflicting concepts. We should instead dream up and experiment with new synergies. Furthermore, we should not forget that, since the Revolution, both training and local areas (particularly the department framework) have had as their aim equality of opportunity and the equality of citizens before the law, according to the republican principle that each member of the public must have the same rights and the same duties, irrespective of their social origin and place of residence. Even though we now know that these aims have not been achieved and that, in fact, continuing training is, on the whole, simply reinforcing the inequalities of initial training, and that the inequality between different areas of France has reached the point already cited (overwhelming predominance of the Paris region, enormous differences in the attractiveness of employment catchment areas within each region), we feel that it is even more essential for the world of training and the world of area-based development to work together much more closely in order to ensure that training ceases to be, as is too often the case, a palliative to economic and social development. It must itself become a factor in regional planning with the long-term goal of regeneration or maintenance of local economic and social fabrics.

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